

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the following questions.

- 1 Do you think there are any airports or runways in Antarctica?
- 2 If there were regular air services to Antarctica, who would use them?
- 3 What kind of runway could be constructed in Antarctica?
- 4 What kind of aircraft could travel and land there?

2 Read and complete the following text with the words in the box.

aviator	construction	crosswinds	environment	equipment	fuel
maintenance	military	pull up	reduced	temperatures	winds

Commercial aircraft lands in Antarctica

An Airbus A319 landed this week in Antarctica on the newly-constructed Wilkins runway. This four-kilometre long runway is made entirely of ice, which is 500 m thick. On this first flight of just over four hours from Hobart in Tasmania, the pilots were able to see the runway from 10 km out and there were no problematical (1) _____ to deal with. After touching down, they were able to (2) _____ within 1,000 m, despite the lack of friction on the aircraft's wheels.

Construction on this runway started in 2005. Laser levelling technology was used to carve a flat, smooth runway out of the ice. Regular (3) _____ of the runway is also required as it has to be continually cleared of snow. The work took place during the summer months when (4) _____ in Antarctica can rise as high as -25°C . In addition to coping with temperatures such as this, workers had to deal with high (5) _____ of up to 100 kt. The runway has been designed to cause minimal damage to the (6) _____.

The closest wildlife is about 20 km away and no (7) _____ is stored at the runway. Aircraft using the runway need to be able to complete their return journey without refuelling.

The (8) _____ of this runway was an essential part of the Antarctic Airlink Project, to which the Australian government has contributed A\$46 million. The regular flights which are expected to begin soon will transport Australian scientists and their (9) _____ to nearby research stations much faster than before. Previously the scientists had to travel by sea. A typical journey time of ten days has now been (10) _____ to a short four-hour flight. There are no plans at the moment to make these flights available to tourists. While other countries have flown to Antarctica before, they have done so over shorter distances in (11) _____ aircraft. The runway has been named after Sir Hubert Wilkins, the explorer and (12) _____, who first flew to Antarctica in 1928.

3 Decide if the following statements are true or false. Write *T* or *F*.

- 1 Completion of this runway means aircraft can land in Antarctica for the first time. _____
- 2 The construction of the runway has caused important environmental damage. _____
- 3 The pilots on the first flight to this runway were able to land in good meteorological conditions. _____
- 4 Aircraft flying to this runway need to carry sufficient fuel for their return journey. _____

4 Do you think that one day this service will be available to tourists?