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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DOLDRUMS AND ROARING FORTIES

Two of the earth's wind belts that have been for centuries of great practical interest to mariners are the doldrums of the equatorial region and the roaring forties of the south temperate zone.

The doldrums lie between the two trade-wind belts, in the immediate neighborhood of the equator. The doldrum belt is a region of light and variable winds with many calms, and is further characterized by cloudy skies, sultry weather, much rain and many violent thunderstorms. In the days before steam navigation this region was much dreaded by sailors, who were liable to lie becalmed in it for weeks together.

The region known as the roaring forties lies between 40 and 50 degrees south latitude. Here there is a more uninterrupted area of ocean than is to be found elsewhere on the globe, and strong westerly winds blow with great constancy. Thanks to these "brave west winds" it is possible, even at the present day, for sailing vessels to compete with steamers in this part of the world. Sailing vessels bound from British ports to New Zealand lay their course eastward by way of the Cape of Good Hope and return home by way of Cape Horn, thus generally escaping head winds in southerly latitudes.

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