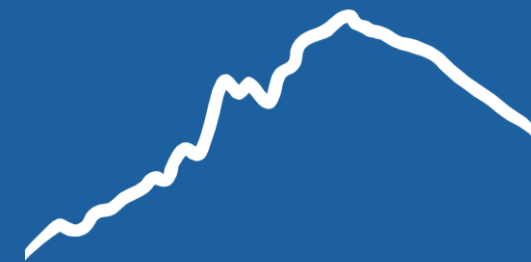


Glacier of the month March 2024

RHÔNE GLACIER



mountainwilderness

International



1898 Courtesy of Emmanuel Bigeard



2023 Courtesy of Hugues Thiebault

Characteristics:

The Rhône Glacier, which extends from 2197 to 3600 m a.s.l., is located in the Valais, a canton in southern Switzerland, near the Italian border. The glacier has an average width of around 2 km and covers an area of approximately 17 km². It is the largest glacier in the Urner Alps and the source of the Rhône river, which flows to the Mediterranean Sea.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the glacier was a major tourist attraction due to its tongue, which back then reached far down into the valley at Gletsch. The glacier is rapidly shrinking and is now only the fifth largest glacier in Switzerland.

In recent decades, the glacier has lost a considerable amount of its mass due to climate change. Its surface is dominated by large crevasses and ice caves. The melting of the glacier ice and the change in runoff regimes are causing serious geo-hydrological problems.

We owe these wonderful images to Hugues Thiebault, member of Mountain Wilderness France, and to his great-grandfather Emmanuel Bigeard, moved by a passion for the mountains that has been passed down through the centuries.