

Glacier of the Month

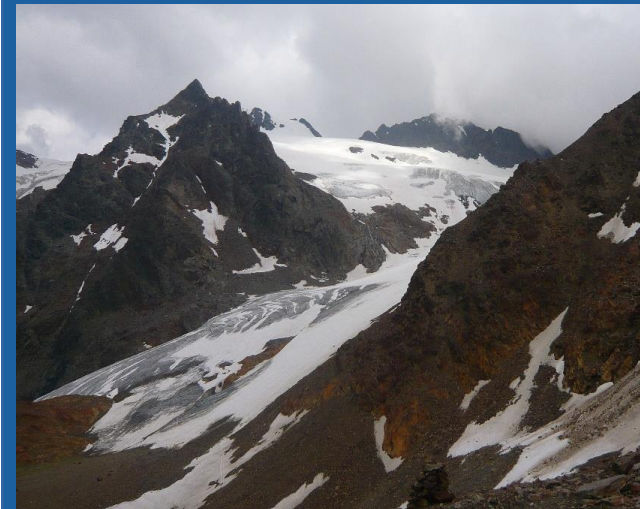
May 2024



HINTEREISFERNER GLACIER



2011 Courtesy of Gotlind Blechschmidt



2022 Courtesy of Tobias Miller



The Weißkugel/Palla Bianca, 3,738 m asl, is located at the border between South Tyrol and North Tyrol and therefore between Italy and Austria. It is the third highest mountain in Austria after Großglockner and Wildspitze and the second highest in the Ötztal Alps/Alpi Venoste.

Thanks to its central location, at the intersection of the Schnalskamm and Weißkamm ridges, the summit offers an impressive view, stretching from the Bernese Alps to the Bernina Group and the Dolomites to the Schober Group.

In 2022, the Hintereisferner glacier lost 5% of its volume - in just one year. This corresponds to almost 20 million m³ of water, about as much as the city of Innsbruck consumes in drinking water in 20 months. In previous years, the average volume loss was 1-2% per year.

Studies show that the climate crisis hits hardest at high altitudes. In the Alps temperatures have risen by 2°C degrees over the course of the 20th Century, already exceeding the 1.5°C Paris Agreement limit. This impacts not only on glaciers, with ice melting and permafrost thawing, and the resulting mudslides and avalanches, but the entire ecosystem. To survive hotter conditions, many species are forced to seek cooler higher mountain regions.