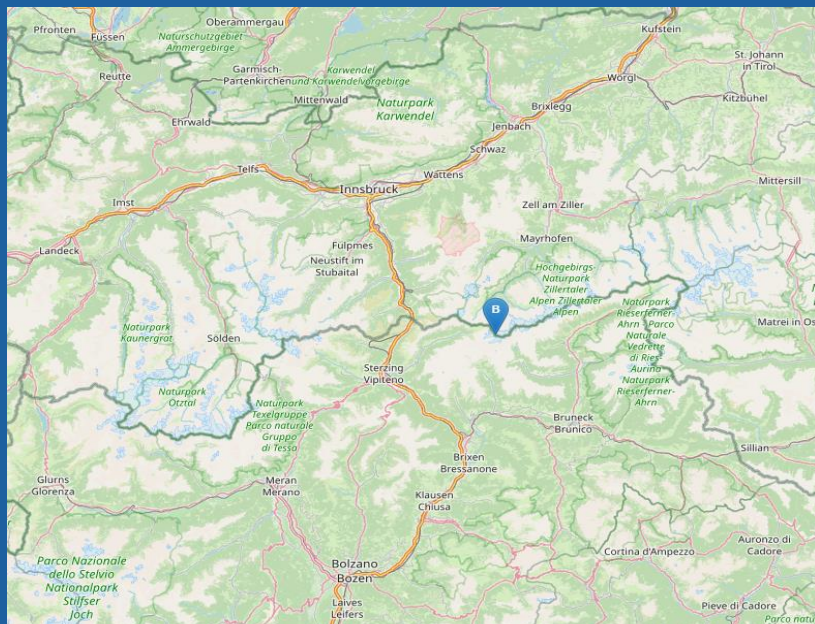


Glacier of the Month November/December 2024



GLIEDERFERNER GLACIER

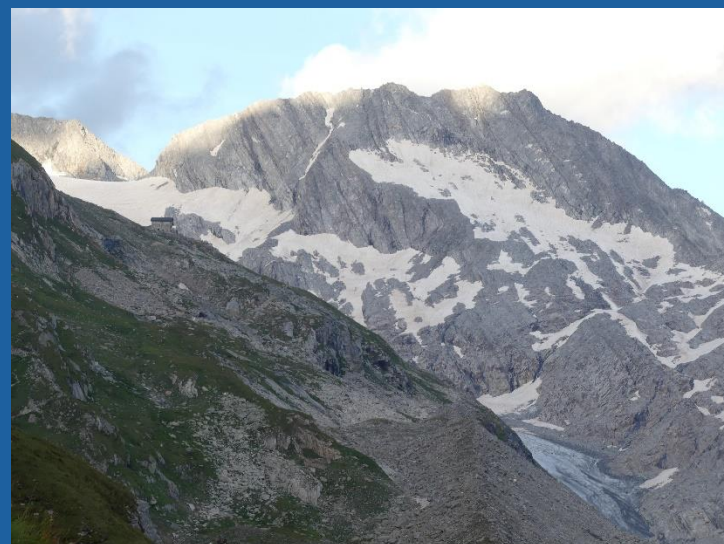


The Hochfeiler (Gran Pilastro, 3,509 m asl) is the highest peak in the Zillertaler Alps, a mountain range in the Eastern Alps. Its summit lies precisely on the main ridge of this range, marking the border between the Austrian province of Tyrol and the Italian province of South Tyrol.

1998 Courtesy of Gotlind Blechschmidt Gliederferner

2024 Courtesy of Martin Rainer

Gliederferner



The Gliederferner glacier (Ghiacciaio del Gran Pilastro) flows southward from the Hochfeiler. Until the turn of the millennium, it was a robust ice stream with thick, white ice. However, between 1998 and 2024, it melted significantly and retreated, leaving the glacier only a few meters thick.

The glacier forefield is now characterized by extensive debris deposits, with old moraine and glacier levels still visible on either side. These remnants may date back to the glacial maximum around 1850 during the Little Ice Age.

The Gliederferner thus joins the ranks of South Tyrolean glaciers facing a bleak future. Scientific data confirms this trend: between 1983 and 1997, the area of South Tyrol's glaciers shrank by 19.7% due to global warming, and by a further 11.9% between 1997 and 2006.

Consequently, the glaciers have retreated by several hundred meters to several kilometers. In recent years, water consumption has increased in both the tourism industry and agriculture, while water supply, especially in summer, has decreased. Additionally, there have been changes in flora and fauna as vegetation periods have shifted.