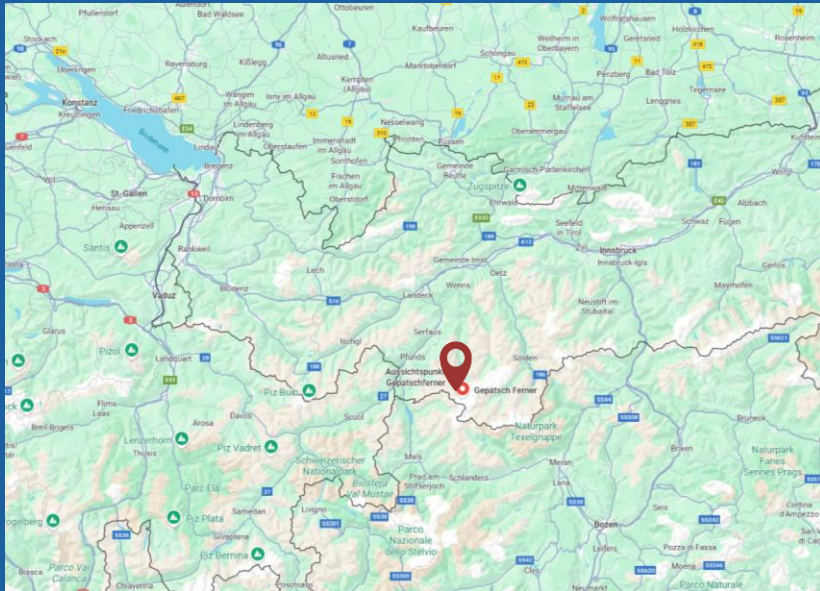


Gepatschferner Glacier, Ötztal Alps, Tyrol



1904 Courtesy of *



* Sammlung Gesellschaft für ökologische Forschung

Glacier of the Month July/August 2025

GEPATSCHFERNER GLACIER



2017 Courtesy of *



The Gepatschferner Glacier (Vedretta della Croda) is located in the southern part of the Kaunertal Valley, Tyrol, western Austria, and has a small portion that extends into Italy, specifically into South Tyrol. It extends over 7.8 km in length and covers 16.6 km² and is the second largest glacier in Austria after the Pasterze Glacier. Together with the Kesselwandferner, it forms the largest contiguous ice surface in the eastern Alps.

The glacier culminates to the northwest in the Weißseespitze/Cima del lago bianco (3,526 m asl), whereas the three peaks of the Hintereisspitzen (approximately 3,450 m asl) border the Gepatschferner Glacier to the southeast.

The glacier is receding about 100 m/year, making it the fastest melting glacier in the Alps. Since around 1850, the Gepatschferner Glacier has lost about half of its mass. Where the glacier tongue once ended, at the Fernergarten or Fernergries, stands the Gepatschhaus 1,928 m asl, built in 1873, the oldest Alpine Club hut in Austria.

Glaciers are the world's largest freshwater reservoirs. The Inn and Rhône rivers, both originating in the Alps, are prime examples of rivers fed by glacial meltwater. One of the Inn's tributaries is the Fagge river, that drains the Gepatschferner Glacier.