

1st descent Trümmelbach IV "The Connection"

The very remarkable glaciers of Eiger (3970Hm), Mönch (4099Hm) and Jungfrau (4158Hm) created since the last ice-period the Trümmelbach valley and with that also the amazing canyons. The total drainage area is 24km² of which around 1/3 of it is covered by snow and ice. During the snowmelt time from Mai-August the water amount is incredible high and can reach up to 20'000l/sec and this water contains and transports up to 20'000 tons of gravel and sediments / year. Due to that the power of the water with its sediments carved several deep and narrow crags with amazing structures and polished walls.

For a long time only the very last waterfall of the Trümmelbachfalls was visible for the people who lived in the valley of Lauterbrunnen. He got his name because it was an invisible waterfall deep in the mountain which created a drum-like sound.

In the late 19Jh the first gangways and stairs where created to make the amazing deep and narrow gorge visible and it became soon a big attraction to tourists.

The canyon had to wait until 2000 to be discovered by canyonists. It was Andreas Brunner and his friends who went down the canyon of Trümmelbach V by using his famous natural anchor and rope sling technique. In total he drilled only two bolts by hand for the whole canyon! What an effort..... 8 years later Caracal made this canyon famous by publishing it on Descent-Canyon and in his canyon topo-book "Le Tour de L'Europe en Canyon"

For several years this canyon was and still is one of the top winter-canyons in Europe until the owner of the tourist-part prohibited to do canyoning in Trümmelbach V. At the moment there is a court going on about this decision which will hopefully end with a good result for us canyoneers in 2017. In 2012 Emmanuel Belut discovered the Trümmelbach III section. In late summer 2012 he luckily invited me and some other friends to open the yet unknown section. At the first day we had to find and equip an exit from the end of the canyon as it ends in the main gorge which had at this time of the year a too high water level to think about going further down. Nevertheless I drilled then already the first anchor for the Trümmelbach IV section in the hope that we will someday return and do "The Connection".

Since then Trümmelbach III got many repeats and it counts to the top canyons in this region with the only downside that you have to ascend on fixed ropes for around 100Hm to exit at the end of the canyon.

One month after the opening of Trümmelbach III we found two other sections of the Trümmelbach high up, starting close to the Eigerglacier.

Trümmelbach I is of medium interest, but still offers some nice sections. Trümmelbach II is partially very nice, but rather short.

So finally after the opening of the section I – III the Trümmelbach offered one more section to be completed. But this section raised many questions:

- Was it possible to go down there?
- How dangerous are the seracs of the Giessenglacier which collapse and fall from time-to time in the canyon?
- Is it possible to cross the section where the collapsed seracs fall in to the canyon?



These questions and the fact that the canyon gets better and deeper from year to year stopped us from the opening until the end of 2016 as suddenly the google-satellite photos offered great new insight in the canyon and its sections.

With that new information's and the fact that it was a perfect and dry autumn for such an exploration we started a try for the opening.

At the 14.12 we meet at 7am in Lauterbrunnen for the train to Wengeneralp. It was a perfect sunny day, but the temperature was still at -1°C in the morning. With Pascal van Duin and Franz Baumgartner, two very experienced explorers of canyons worldwide, Sven Schärer and me the team contained three mountain guides and one canyoning guide.

We had heavy backpacks with long ropes, two drills, enough anchors, crampons, ice-axes.....luckily the approach was fast and easy.

We agreed that we will have a proper observation from the side of the critical area to check if this section is passable or if there are any emergency exits.

The section below the Giessenglacier seracs looked passable and there was no ice-fall in the canyon for quite a long time. The ice looked blank and there was also a potential ice-tunnel visible which would make the whole mini-glacier easy to pass underneath by following the water course. The mini-glacier was also much smaller than from what we knew from the google-satellite photos.

Based on the observation we decided to have a GO and that we will try to finalize the Trümmelbach story. We hiked to the fixed exit-ropes of Trümmelbach III and descended down in the canyon. The first anchor from 2012 was still there and waited for us to be used the first time. After a few very icy drops we reached the deep and narrow section. Several drops down



by Matthias Holzinger

narrow slots follow each other. The conditions we faced were not too complicated, we had a low water level and the only risk we faced was ice or rock falling from above. Due to the rock walls up to 2400m high everything can fall down in the canyon thanks to the gravity force.

High above our heads we could see chock stones blocked between the narrow walls or water springs trickling down in the canyon.



The rock in the canyon was mostly very compact and solid so we drilled except once only single points 10mm x 80mm stainless steel expansion bolts with a plate and a welded ring to abseil.

After the narrow and dark section we faced soon after the mini-ice glacier. As observed and hoped from the side 2h earlier, there was an ice tunnel and we could pass the mini-glacier by following the water stream.

Headlamps were required as the ice tunnel had a length of 120m. We were glad that we did not

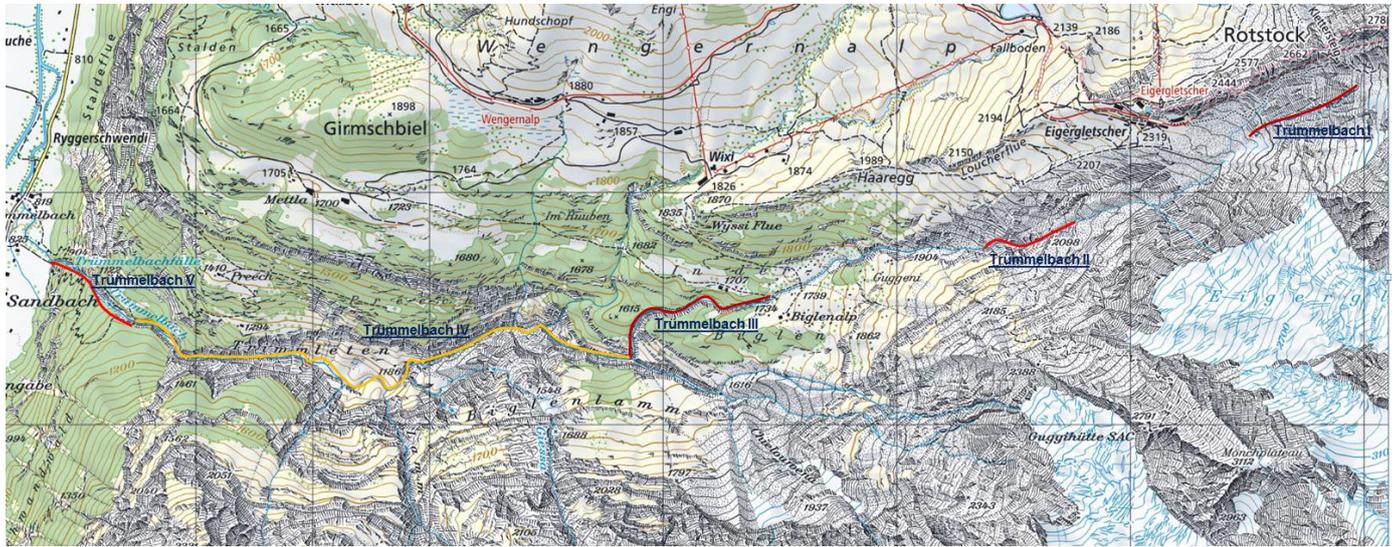
had to use the ice-climbing equipment and that it was so easy to pass this section which we thought would be the most critical part. With that we saved a lot of time and could enjoy our trip even more. After the mini-glacier there is a longer walking section to the next entrenchment and we could enjoy the view of the amazing high mountains around us. We felt like little humans between such huge rock faces.

The last technical section started with some fun elements, small slides and jumps followed each other in clear and deep pools and it ended with a great last section which started with a deep slot in perfectly carved rock like Trümmelbach V.

The followed 1.2km long walk in the riverbed gave us time to settle the impressions and feelings of what we were just able to experience.

3.5h after we started to descent the fixed ropes of the Trümmelbach III exit, we reached the bridge and the start of Trümmelbach V. We all have done Trümmelbach V already several times before and we had a really hard time to exit here and not continue further down. But due to the already described running court case we didn't wanted to make things worse.

Happy that we could explore such an amazing canyon and that we could now realize the missing puzzle part in the Trümmelbach history, we hiked down to Lauterbrunnen and had a beer.



With a total length of 6.4km and a height difference of 1855Hm the integral canyon is now one of the longest and also one of the most beautiful canyons in Europe.

Unfortunately all five sections are almost impossible and not worth to combine, as the ideal time in the year for the several sections is not the same.

Perfect combinations:

Trümmelbach I – III, August - Oktober

Trümmelbach III-V, November – Dezember (check the allowed time for Trümmelbach V)

Trümmelbach I: 350Hm / v3a1III / beauty: 2.4/4

Trümmelbach II: 220Hm / v3a2III / beauty: 2.8/4

Trümmelbach III: 240Hm / v3a3V / beauty: 3.6/4

Trümmelbach IV: 395Hm / v4a4V / beauty: 3.4/4

Trümmelbach V: 260Hm / v5a5V / beauty 3.9/4

