

Argentine glacier advances despite global warming

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FILE - In this May 18, 2009 file photo, tourists walk on Perito Moreno Glacier in Los Glaciares National Park in Argentina's Patagonia region. (AP Photo/Natacha Pisarenko, File)

(AP) -- Argentina's Perito Moreno glacier is one of only a few ice fields worldwide that have withstood rising global temperatures.

Nourished by Andean snowmelt, the glacier constantly grows even as it spawns icebergs the size of apartment buildings into a frigid lake, maintaining a nearly perfect equilibrium since measurements began more than a century ago.

"We're not sure why this happens," said Andres Rivera, a glacialist with the Center for Scientific Studies in Valdivia, Chile. "But not all [glaciers](#) respond equally to [climate change](#)."

Viewed at a safe distance on cruise boats or the wooden observation deck just beyond the glacier's leading edge, Perito Moreno's jagged surface radiates a brilliant white in the strong Patagonian sun. Submerged sections glow deep blue.

And when the wind blows in a cloud cover, the 3-mile-wide (5 kilometer) glacier seems to glow from within as the surrounding mountains and water turn a meditative gray.

Every few years, Perito Moreno expands enough to touch a point of land across Lake Argentina, cutting the nation's largest freshwater lake in half and forming an ice dam as it presses against the shore.

The water on one side of the dam surges against the glacier, up to 200 feet (60 meters) above lake level, until it breaks the ice wall with a thunderous crash, drowning the applause of hundreds of tourists.

"It's like a massive building falling all of the sudden," said park ranger Javier D'Angelo, who experienced the rupture in 2008 and 1998.

The rupture is a reminder that while Perito Moreno appears to be a vast, 19-mile-long (30 kilometer) frozen river, it's a dynamic icescape that moves and cracks unexpectedly.

"The glacier has a lot of life," said Luli Gavina, who leads mini-treks across the glacier's snow fields.

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