



### **Trip Factsheet: Matterhorn Climber**

#### **The Matterhorn (4,478m/14,620ft)**

The Matterhorn is the most iconic mountain in the Alps. It is known as Monte Cervino in Italian and Mont Cervin in French.

It is located in the Pennine Alps (at 45°58'N, 7°39'E) on the border between Switzerland and Italy. It was first climbed in 1865 by a climbing party that included Edward Whymper. It was the last major mountain of the Alps to be climbed.

The North Face of the Matterhorn is one of the six great north faces of the Alps. The others are: the Cima Grande di Lavaredo, the Piz Badile, the Petit Dru, the Eiger, and the Grandes Jorasses. The Matterhorn is usually ascended in 2 days via the Hörnli ridge, a route that is graded AD. It is primarily a rock climb with some sections of steep snow and ice. The route begins with a 2 hour walk to the Hörnli hut from the cable car station at Schwarzsee. The summit day has 1200m/3937ft of ascent on sustained class 2-3 ground, sometimes with fixed ropes. The route has considerable exposure. Normally crampons are worn only the upper half of the route but this depends on the ground conditions. The round trip from the Hörnli Hut to the summit and back takes between 10- 12 hours.

#### **Switzerland**

Switzerland is a land-locked alpine country in Western Europe. It is bordered by Germany to the North, Austria and Liechtenstein to the East, Italy to the South and France to the West. It is one of the world's richest countries and its population enjoys a very high standard of living. Switzerland has 4 national languages: French, German, Italian and Romansh.

#### **Travel to Chamonix**

We start our Matterhorn weeks with the first 4 days of climbing in Chamonix. The most convenient airport is Geneva and from here the transfer time up to Chamonix by road is just 1 hr 15mins. To travel between the airport and Chamonix we recommend you reserve a seat on one of the many commercial shuttle buses. Mountain Tracks can book this for you, usual prices are from £40 per person one-way, please supply your full flight details to us so we can make the reservation.

Want to take the train to the resort? No problem – it's possible to get to Chamonix by train from the UK using the Eurostar from London St. Pancras to Paris, then the TGV to Bellegarde and a regional train to Chamonix. The journey can be done in 1 day. For more information and other useful train travel details look at [www.snowcarbon.co.uk](http://www.snowcarbon.co.uk)

#### **Rendezvous in Chamonix**

Our Matterhorn courses start at about 6pm on your day of arrival in Chamonix with a welcome meeting and briefing with your guide in your hotel. Our guide will come with an up-to-date weather forecast for the week and will run through the planned itinerary and do an equipment check. This meeting is also an opportunity for you to ask any last minute questions and ensure you have all the information you need for the course.

### **Accommodation in Chamonix**

For our Mont Blanc weeks we usually stay in the Hotel Les Lanchers in Chamonix Les Praz or the Hotel Couronne in Argentiere, these are both comfortable 3\* hotels with spacious rooms, bar and restaurant. You usually stay 3 nights during the week in the chalet on a half-board basis. Other nights are spent in the high mountain huts.

All accommodation is included in the trip price.

### **Staying in Mountain Huts**

The high alpine huts are one of the big attractions to trekking in the Alps. They allow us to enjoy the mountains with only light packs and without having to worry about meals or finding somewhere to sleep! Most huts have only very basic facilities. Sleeping arrangements are in mixed sex dormitory-style rooms with bunks; there can be up to 20 people in one room. Washing facilities are limited and generally there is no running water in any of the huts, although this can vary in some huts. There are basins in which you can use bottled water to wash the best you can and clean your teeth, but they are NOT generally in private cubicles and are mixed sex. Toilets are generally septic-tank type (so non-flushing) and again mixed sex. You need to be prepared for simple living in the huts and appreciate they are located at high altitude and in inhospitable terrain.

A 3-course evening meal and breakfast are served by the guardian and his team and food is usually nourishing and filling. Beer, wine, soft drinks and snacks are also available. All food and drink in the huts is delivered by helicopter and consequently prices will be high e.g. e.g. between 10-12€ or 12-16CHF for a 1.5litre bottle of still water.

There are a few basic hut 'rules' that you need to follow so that you (and your fellow trekkers) have a pleasant stay:

- Before you go inside the hut you must take off your boots and leave these together with your ice-axe, crampons, harness and helmet in the boot room. Be sure to store these carefully as the hut is likely to get very busy and you'll need to find all your kit in the morning rush, which will all look the same!
- ***Top Tip:*** *clearly name or place a small amount of coloured tape on your boots, axe, crampons, harness and helmet to help you identify them amongst all the others*
- Hut slippers are provided and must be worn in the hut
- Your guide will register you with the guardian and will assign you your bunk
- Follow the instructions of your guide and keep requests to the guardian and his team to a minimum – they are usually very busy sorting out groups, cooking meals, keeping the hut clean
- In the morning your guide will often want to leave early – be sure to have all your kit ready to go the night before. Be organized and everything will be much easier!

What to wear in the hut - we are often asked by people what they should wear in the hut. It's a good question as you don't want to carry many or any extra clothes with you if they are not required. In the huts you will probably end up wearing your base layer thermals (top & bottom) or you can carry a lightweight pair of loose trousers to wear around the hut in the afternoons/evenings. Your base layer top is what you will probably wear on your top half or you can carry a t-shirt to wear in the hut that can double to sleep in.

## **Meals**

Breakfasts: in the huts a typical breakfast will consist of coffee, tea, hot chocolate, orange juice, bread, butter, jam.

Evening meals: a set menu of 3 courses. Typical menu will be soup to start, a main dish of meat or pasta with mash or rice and vegetables. Dessert will be fruit or mousse. Most huts now cater well for vegetarian, vegan and gluten free diets; however you need to remember that they don't have an unlimited supply of fresh food and subsequently choice can be limited, you cannot afford to be fussy!

Lunch: huts offer a basic packed lunch which you can order the night before, this will usually consist of bread with cheese, salami and/or a sandwich plus a chocolate bar, crisps and fresh fruit if they have it available.

Drinks and snacks: the huts serve tea, coffee, bottled water, soft drinks, beer and wine. They also sell some snacks. Items sold in the huts are expensive and we do recommend you bring some of your favourite hill snacks with you on the trip.

Please note that lunches, drinks and snacks are not included in the price of the trip and need to be paid for individually.

## **Guides and Group Sizes**

All our mountaineering trips are run by our team of IFMGA Mountain Guides. The team is led by Olly Allen, Matt Dickinson and Nick Parks. The maximum guide/climber ratio for the Matterhorn Climber week is 1:2 on the first 4 training days and 1:1 on the 2 summit days.

## **Itinerary**

Our standard Matterhorn course is 6 guided days with 7 nights' accommodation.

We keep the itinerary flexible and your guide will decide on the itinerary for the training and preparation days based on the ground and weather conditions and your previous mountaineering experience.

If all goes according to plan you will ascend to the Hörnli hut on the 5<sup>th</sup> guided day and the Matterhorn ascent will be undertaken on the 6<sup>th</sup> guided day. You will return back to Zermatt in the afternoon.

The guide will decide whether it is safe to make the summit attempt and he/she will arrange an alternative itinerary in the case where the Matterhorn ascent cannot be undertaken.

## **Climate**

The Alps generally has a very pleasant climate throughout the spring, summer and autumn with warm days and cool nights, with daytime temperatures in the valley around 24 - 28°C. At high altitude the temperature often goes down below -10 and can feel even colder with wind chill.

## **Getting Fit For the Matterhorn**

One question that comes top of the list when fielding enquiries for the Matterhorn is 'how fit do I need to be?' Its best to think of it as an assault course spread over twelve hours rather than a short half marathon. Not only do you have to work on your aerobic fitness to move effectively above 4000m but you also need upper body strength and endurance to pull yourself up on rock and fixed ropes.

Aerobic fitness is best gained over a number of months and should be tailored to the 'endurance' end of activity. Short hits in the gym will help but far better is to get outside and do some running. This can be on or off road and the longer the better. A couple of 10km runs a

week is a good starting point to build on. Ideally you are aiming for runs of around 2 hours in length but these don't have to be fast but hills are better than flat. Hill walking and scrambling in mountainous areas are the best as you are mimicking climbing the Matterhorn but at a lower level. One thing that many people underestimate is how tired your legs get climbing down. Training in the hills carrying a small rucksack with weight helps build your leg fitness for the ups and downs.

With your upper body using a cross trainer would help with conditioning but again there is no substitute for the real thing. Utilise an indoor climbing wall and practise either climbing roped or bouldering (short climbing routes above big padded mats). Indoor climbing once a week will pay dividends when hauling yourself up the fixed ropes (imagine thick school gymnasium ropes against a wall) or scrambling up the rocky cliffs in between. Weights in the gym and pull ups would do if a climbing wall wasn't convenient. The perfect upper body training would again be outside, climbing and scrambling on real rock in the mountains has the advantage of teaching you essential balance and technique skills.

The Matterhorn is a tough twelve hours of physical effort and mental concentration so make sure you start at least 4 months before your trip. The all-round fitness is more akin to a slow steady plodder who can keep going without tiring than a young racing snake. Some of the best clients we have guided up the Matterhorn have been in their mid 60s who are very shore footed but can move at the same speed all day with only a few muesli bars for sustenance. Summiting is not easy but the rewards are unparalleled views from the summit of Europe's most famous mountain.

*Please ask us for our "Matterhorn Technical Training and Fitness Guide" to read over if you're planning on this trip.*

#### **What's included in the price of your holiday?**

- All guide fees and expenses
- Chamonix hotel accommodation on B&B basis (twin rooms)
- Hut fees with breakfast and evening meal

#### **Scheduled expenses**

- Travel to and from Zermatt
- Evening meals in Zermatt
- Uplift costs and local transfers – the main lifts in Chamonix and Zermatt are expensive. We estimate the costs will be in the region of £120-£150 for the week which will need to be paid locally in Euros and Swiss Francs.
- Lunches and drinks (25-35 CHF per day)
- Equipment hire (as required)
- Personal Insurance

#### **Spending Money**

You should bring an allowance for lunches, drinks (including bottled water) which is brought in huts and can be expensive. We suggest around 100 – 150€ and the same amount in Swiss Francs should be sufficient to cover all personal expenses. Please note that most of the trek is in Switzerland and you should bring most of your money in Swiss Francs. You will need some

Euros for the time spent in Chamonix. There are cash point facilities in Chamonix and in Zermatt. Please note most mountain huts do not accept credit cards.

### **Equipment and Kit Hire**

A copy of our recommended ski kit list can be found on our website or you can call or email us and we will send you a copy.

Essential items you need to have:

- Mountaineering boots B2 or B3 that are crampon compatible
- Ice axe
- Crampons
- Climbing helmet
- Harness with karabiner
- Telescopic walking poles
- 30 – 35 litre rucksack

If you need to rent any technical equipment you should let us know in advance. This can usually be arranged through our guides and you will need to pay the guide directly in resort in Euros or Swiss Francs.

### **Food**

We suggest you bring with you or buy in resort snack food that you can take out on the hill with you each day. Things like cereal bars, dried fruit and nuts, chocolate, sugary sweets or your favourite hill snacks. When you're staying overnight in huts its best to take supplies for the days you are away. Huts do sell food but it's expensive and sometimes stocks run low.

If you have any food allergies or dietary requirements especially if you are a Coeliac (Gluten free) or have a dairy allergy we recommend you bring some food with you so you can supplement your dinners. Most huts now cater well for vegetarian, vegan and gluten free diets; however you need to remember that they don't have an unlimited supply of fresh food and subsequently choice can be limited, you cannot afford to be fussy!

The huts can provide a small basic packed lunch of bread, salami, cheese and chocolate that you can buy each day but it's important that you don't rely on this option only. You do need to carry some snack food for each day.

You will also generally stop for short breaks each hour where you should eat something each time so you maintain your energy levels throughout the day.

### **Insurance**

You need to have personal insurance that covers you for off piste skiing and the cover must include helicopter rescue.

For UK & European residents we recommend the Ski Club's insurance. For more details and to purchase a policy online visit <http://www.skiclubinsurance.co.uk/>. If you need assistance with arranging insurance please let us know.

You should bring a copy of your insurance certificate with you to the Alps.

For EU residents we recommend that you also obtain the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) prior to travel and take this with you in addition to your personal insurance.

See <https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card>

**What happens next?**

We will contact you 8 weeks before your arrival date to request the final balance payment. Around 2-3 weeks before your arrival date we will email you final joining instructions with relevant contact details for your guide(s), hotels, etc.

**More information**

If you have any questions or need further details don't hesitate to contact us:

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