

## The Matterhorn

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Dear Climber,

Thanks for your interest in climbing in the Alps with IMG. The enclosed packet of information contains all of the information you should need to answer your questions about the upcoming Matterhorn program. This includes general information about climbing in the Alps with International Mountain Guides, an itinerary and equipment list. If you have additional questions, feel free to contact the IMG office [office@mountainguides.com](mailto:office@mountainguides.com), or contact me directly at [george@mountainguides.com](mailto:george@mountainguides.com). There is limited participation in these trips so I recommend an early application. The order in which your deposit and climbing resume is received will determine your participation on the program.

–George Dunn, Program Director

### About the program:

We will climb three or four peaks in the vicinity of Zermatt, Switzerland. The climbing is a progression that culminates in an ascent of the Matterhorn. After initial training at a local crag, we will attempt Pollux (13,425'), a 4,000-meter peak involving a glacier approach and exposed mixed snow and rock climbing to the summit. The next objectives may be Castor (13,868'), the Breithorn, or similar 4,000-meter peaks that involve additional glacier travel and training in mixed snow and rock climbing techniques. Our final and most important goal will be, of course, the Matterhorn. For this ascent, we will split the group into two parts to allow the guides to lead one-on-one. Skills required for the Matterhorn include the ability to move steadily in mountain boots over fourth and moderate fifth class rock. Participants must have confidence moving over steep, exposed, and sometimes loose rock. The more difficult sections will be led and belayed by the guides, but the easier sections of third and fourth class climbing will be climbed moving simultaneously. Good balance, coordination and stamina are a necessity. The upper portion of the mountain will likely include snow and ice over rock and climbers will be wearing crampons. There is fixed rope cable on some of the steepest upper pitches and some strenuous hand-over-hand climbing is involved. Summit day from the hut takes up to 6 hours of rapid climbing and an equal amount of time in descent. Prospective team members must have a high enough level of skill and stamina to meet the rigors of this climb. Final determination of each climber's ability to complete the climb will be the responsibility of the guide leading their rope. Nonetheless, each participant must come fully prepared to meet the demands of this challenging and exciting climb. The Matterhorn is without a doubt the best known and most sought after peak in Europe. The ultimate challenge for any aspiring Alpinist.

### Matterhorn: Just The Facts

**Matterhorn Summit:**  
14,691' • 4478m

**Set Your GPS:**  
45° 58' N • 7° 39' E

**By Any Other Name:**  
The Matterhorn is a majestic peak on the Swiss/Italian border consisting of four ridges and faces. Its Italian name is Monte Cervino

**Inauspicious First:**  
Edward Whymper and party's first ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865 ended in tragedy as Douglas Hadow, Charles Hudson, Lord Francis Douglas, and the guide Michel Croz all fell to their deaths on the descent.

**No Longer Just For Loners:**  
Each year, more than 2,000 people climb to the top of the Matterhorn.

**Live Matt-Cam:**  
See the Matterhorn right now:  
[www.topin.ch/ch/zermatt/](http://www.topin.ch/ch/zermatt/)

### Dates and Prices

**July 15-22, 2012**

Landcost: \$3,500 (Guide Ratio 2:1)

Private: \$5,500 (Guide Ratio 1:1)

Group maximum size: **6 climbers, 3 guides**. Trip starts and finishes in Zermatt. Program fee does not include lodging, hut fees or meals. Participants must provide their own transportation to and from Zermatt.

## The Matterhorn – General Information

This prospectus includes an itinerary of the forthcoming trip along with a number of tips and details to help you prepare for it. Should you have any questions after reading over the material, feel free to contact us at IMG.

### Conditioning

The best training program for such a climbing trip is one that includes aerobic activities such as running, swimming and bicycling. Get in plenty of time hiking with a pack or running up and down hills. Muscle strengthening exercises for the legs, arms and back are also important. It is critical for the Matterhorn that participants are able to move rapidly up steep, exposed rock scrambling and climbing for up to six continuous hours up and an equal amount of time in descent. Adequate advance preparation is mandatory.

### Climbing

Knowledge of basic mountaineering skills, including ice axe arrest, cramponing and roped glacier travel is required. In addition, specific rock climbing skills are necessary. This includes the ability to climb rapidly with hands and feet, in balance over 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and moderate 5<sup>th</sup> class rock (up to 5.7). Past participation in a week or longer advanced level rock climbing course, and completion of additional full day multi pitch rock climbs in mountain boots is required. Other necessary skills include knowledge of belaying and rappelling. Submission of a climbing resume and an interview with the program director is necessary for participation in the program.

### Accommodations

Accommodations are **not** included in the landcost fee. We will overnight as a group in climbing huts on each peak. The European huts are quite luxurious compared to those in the States and their convenience has made them popular with climbers throughout the Alps. Sleeping bags and pads are not required on this trip. Bunks with blankets are provided at each hut. The guides will secure reservations for the group for each night at a hut, but it is up to each person to pay this fee at the hut.

Between climbs IMG recommends team members stay at the same hotel in Zermatt, the Alpenblick. This 3 star hotel is very comfortable and picturesque. It is up to each person to make arrangements for their own lodging, but IMG's travel agent, CTT Destinations, [IMG@cttdestinations.com](mailto:IMG@cttdestinations.com), can help with bookings. We encourage sharing rooms, and can help to expedite this for you. The vagaries of the weather and changes in the climbing itinerary require flexible hotel reservations. IMG will do its best to specify which days will be spent in hotels, but some last minute changes may occur. If we require additional nights of lodging at the hotel, the Alpenblick will do its best to accommodate you. However, they cannot cancel a reservation for you at short notice. If they are unable to provide lodging for additional nights at short notice, they will be happy to find the closest comparable lodging at another hotel for you.

### The Alps: Just The Facts

#### Size Matters:

The Alps are the largest mountain system in Europe. The mountains begin near the Mediterranean Sea and form a border between France and Italy. They extend northward and eastward through northern Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, southern Germany, Austria, and Slovenia. The range forms a chain about 660 miles long, covering an area of about 80,000 square miles.

#### Scientist Hardguys:

Few people attempted climbing in the Alps until the 1700's, when scientists began to study the landforms and the biology of the region. In 1786, two Frenchmen, physician Michel G. Paccard and his guide, Jacques Balmat, became the first to reach the top of Mont Blanc. They recorded scientific observations along the way.

#### First Boot-Prints on Top:

Many of the Alpine peaks were climbed for the first time during the mid-1800's, when mountaineering gained popularity as a sport. In 1855, a group of Swiss and British men made the first successful climb to the top of Monte Rosa. In 1865, climbers reached the top of the Matterhorn. Most Alpine summits had been climbed by 1900.

#### Look for Summit Seashells:

Geologists believe that a 100 million years ago, a large sea covered what is now the Alpine region. When land masses north and south of this sea slowly began colliding, the pressure forced the seabed to fold into ridges and valleys. The highest parts of the Alps include rocks such as gneiss, granite, and schist, which were formed deep within the earth. Many Alpine ranges consist chiefly of limestone that also formed in the seabed. Most of the Alps were formed about 15 million years ago.

## Travel Arrangements

The Matterhorn trip starts and ends in Zermatt. Transportation to Zermatt is not included in the cost of the program. It is generally best to fly directly to Geneva, arriving in the morning, and then catch a train departing hourly for Zermatt. Plan to arrive no later than the evening before the starting date of the trip, but it is best to allow an additional day to recover from jet lag.

When you purchase your train ticket, be sure to ask about the best deal available for your specific travel needs. I normally buy a Swiss Card right at the railway station in Switzerland. It costs about \$125 U.S., but is good for a round trip ticket from the airport to a single destination as well as 50% discounts on gondola and lift tickets. You can also buy a Swiss Pass or a Flexipass if you plan to travel more in Switzerland. These passes are often good for a discount on lifts and gondola rides as well. Other options exist if you plan to travel to and from different countries. For more information train travel in Switzerland, check out [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com) or [www.rail.ch](http://www.rail.ch).

Participants in all programs should be sure to make allowance for the significant time change when arranging your flight to Europe. You will want to arrive at least a day in advance in order to overcome jet lag. Please notify the IMG office of your arrival time and flight plan prior to the start of the program.

IMG's travel agent, CTT Destinations is well versed in our European operations. Please contact them directly, [IMG@cttdestinations.com](mailto:IMG@cttdestinations.com), for help in booking airfare, lodging before and after your program and train transportation. They'll be glad to help.

## Travel Insurance

We require that you insure yourself against potentially expensive difficulties that may arise. First, Trip Cancellation Insurance may provide financial relief should you be forced to withdraw from the program before it even happens. Next, make sure you have adequate Travel Insurance for coverage should you have a problem during the trip. Medical care and evacuation in remote locations can be expensive. For more info, please see: [Trip Cancellation and Travel Insurance](#).

Rescue insurance is also available in Switzerland and France. The Swiss national rescue insurance is Rega, and can be ordered in advance online at [www.rega.ch](http://www.rega.ch). Cost is 30 Swiss Francs for the year. **Please allow several weeks advance time to receive your card!** The French national rescue insurance is Carte Neige, and is available in Chamonix at the tourist office. Both Rega and Carte Neige are good throughout the Alps, so only one is necessary. You must have your own rescue insurance, and make sure you are clear about what it covers and does not cover.

## Passports

If you do not have a passport, or if your current one is due to expire before, or during the trip, you must obtain a new one. Passports are required to travel in Europe. Passport information is available from your main post office or your local passport agency. At this time, visas are not required for travel in France, Switzerland and Italy. It is a good idea to carry Xeroxed copies of your passport and birth certificate to ease matters in case of loss or theft of your passport.

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*“I have no doubt that my success on the Matterhorn was because I was climbing with George... he knows what it takes not just to get to the top, but more crucially, to get the whole team down safely. I trust him implicitly...”*

—Bob G.

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: [www.mountainguides.com/comments.shtml](http://www.mountainguides.com/comments.shtml)

## Weather

The weather in the West Alps is similar to that of the Cascades in the Pacific Northwest. One can experience several days of beautifully clear skies or be plagued by storms. However, late July, August and September is generally the best time to climb in this area, for reasons of weather and snow conditions. By bringing the proper clothing we will be prepared for all types of weather.

The enclosed itinerary is designed with some allowance for bad weather but may require further alterations. We will attempt to adhere to the schedule as much as possible, but our goal is to have a safe, fun climbing trip. Some flexibility is important for the smooth operation of the program. The guides will be open to suggestions throughout the trip.

## Equipment

The enclosed list of gear is required of each individual. I have attempted to give a brief description of each piece of equipment so there should be no difficulties in compiling your gear.

## Food

Each person is responsible for providing his or her own meals during the course of the program. In the climbing huts, breakfast and dinner can be purchased for each night. Between climbs we will have the opportunity to sample local specialties in some of the many excellent restaurants and specialty shops found in Zermatt. The team will normally have the option of meeting as a group for dinner in the evenings, and this is an enjoyable and social part of the program. There will be opportunity to purchase lunch food in town prior to each of the climbs. Our hotel provides a very nice continental breakfast with the price of lodging.

## Miscellaneous Information

For travel to Europe, it is a good idea to have just two pieces of luggage: your pack with all of your climbing gear inside and a medium duffel bag for extra clothing and items to be strapped onto your pack at a later time, such as crampons and ice axe. The weather in this part of Europe is much like that of the Pacific Northwest, so be sure to bring appropriate summer clothing for travel to the mountains. Keep your street clothes simple and bring a good pair of light comfortable hiking shoes. A sweater should be sufficient for evenings in town. Casual dress will be fine for all of our dining. Hand washable clothing allows you to do laundry in your room and get by with less. There are self-service and full-service laundries in town.

ATM's are found almost everywhere in Europe and give the best exchange rate but mind the exchange fee! Check with your banker to make sure that your card will work in Europe, and then you can get by with bringing less cash or traveler's checks. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are accepted in most shops and restaurants, Visa more often than American Express. Train fares along with related gondola rides and cog rail trains will cost from \$300-\$400 total and can all be charged on a Visa. I would plan to spend from \$1,000 to \$1,500 total during the trip for all meals, train fares and personal expenses.

I encourage you to do as much reading on the area as you can. A little research on the history of Alpinism in Europe can add greatly to the experience once you are there. A good basic guide book that describes the climbs we will attempt is [The Alpine 4000m Peaks by the Classic Routes](#), by Richard Goedeke, 1991.

I hope this information will help you in preparing for the trip. If you have any questions at all, please contact us at IMG.

–George Dunn, Program Director

## The Matterhorn Course Itinerary

### Zermatt, Switzerland: The Matterhorn, Pollux, Castor and the Breithorn

The trip starts and finishes in Zermatt, Switzerland. It is the responsibility of each participant to arrange transportation to Zermatt by the night prior to the starting date. The simplest route is to fly to Geneva or Zurich, arriving in the morning and take a train directly from the airport to Zermatt. There is frequent daily train service to Zermatt. When making arrangements, keep in mind the time change. It would be wise to allow a day of rest in Switzerland prior to the start of the program to help deal with jet lag. If you would like help with your flight arrangements, recommendations for a hotel in Geneva or Zurich, or plan to arrive in Zermatt early, feel free to contact IMG's travel agent, CTT Destinations, [IMG@cttdestinations.com](mailto:IMG@cttdestinations.com). They are knowledgeable of our programs and will be happy to help you work out your itinerary.

- Day 01** Meet for breakfast at 8:00 a.m. at the Hotel Alpenblick, Zermatt. After breakfast we will take light daypacks and ride the Gornergrat cog rail train up to the Riffelhorn for a day of rock practice and training. In the early afternoon we will hike back down to Zermatt, stopping, perhaps at one of the beer gardens along the way for refreshment. Back at the hotel we will retire early. **(hotel reservation required)**
- Day 02** Early morning wake up to catch the first gondola up to the Kleine Matterhorn (3883 m.). A glacier walk brings us down to Pollux (4092 m.). The climb starts with a snow/rock ridge climb to the crux rock pitch that has some fun exposure (and thankfully, a handline). A final snow ridge brings us to the summit. We will descend the peak and hike down to the Refugio Val D'Ayas just across the border in Italy where we will spend the night.
- Day 03** From the hut we will ascend our second 4000 meter peak, Castor (4228 m.). A technically easier ascent, it will provide us with additional acclimatization. There will be opportunity to practice some rock pitches on Roccia Nera as the group desires. Second night at Refugio Val D'Ayas.
- Day 04** Snow and rock climbing on the Central Briethorn (4164 m.). We will get an early start from the hut for our ascent. The route involves some steeper snow/ice up to 45 degrees. There are several pitches of good rock climbing similar in difficulty to the Matterhorn. This will be our final training climb prior to our attempt of the Matterhorn. We will descend from the Breithorn and ride the tram down to our hotel in Zermatt. **(hotel reservation required)**
- Day 05** Tram ride up then an easy hike to Hornlihutte (3260 m.). The afternoon will be spent previewing and practicing on the first part of the climb of the Matterhorn (4478 m.). We will overnight at the climbing hut.
- Day 06** The guides will split the group into two parts so that they can guide the Matterhorn one-on-one. The first team will make the 12-hour round trip climb, then descend to Zermatt. The guides will stay at the hut, and climb again the next day. **(optional hotel reservation)**
- Day 07** Second team ascent of the Matterhorn, and descent to Zermatt. **(optional hotel reservation)**
- Day 08** This final day is reserved for use on the Matterhorn in the case of inclement weather. If our climb goes according to plan, then this day will be available for an additional climb. **(hotel reservation required)**

**Note:** This itinerary is merely a guideline for the trip. The lead guide will retain the right to make changes to suit the climbing conditions, the weather and the strength and experience of the group. Our main goal will be the Matterhorn and changes in the schedule may be made to increase our chances of success. This may involve moving the climb up a day or more on the schedule to take advantage of better weather. However, the Matterhorn is a very demanding and exposed climb. It is not uncommon for stormy weather to render the mountain unguideable for days at a time. This could preclude us from even making a summit attempt. In this case, there are countless other possibilities for other ascents in the area. The final decision on climbing the Matterhorn and all peaks rests solely with the head guide. In addition, the leader will have complete authority over determining each member's continued participation in each of the climbs.

## The Matterhorn Required Personal Equipment List

- Boots: Lug-sole leather/synthetic climbing boots. A lined, technical boot is much better than plastic boots for the rock climbing we will do.
- Lightweight trail shoe- we used these for greater comfort approaching some climbing huts
- Socks: 2 changes of heavy wool or synthetic, with liners
- Gaiters, Knee length
- Longjohns: Synthetic tops and bottoms
- Pants: Synthetic stretch climbing pants (Schoeller fabric) or light fleece
- Rainpants: With full length zippers to go on over boots and crampons
- Shirt: Expedition weight (100 weight "Polartec")
- Soft shell jacket
- Rain/wind shell: Waterproof/breathable jacket with hood
- Warm parka: Down or synthetic filled with hood – should NOT be expedition weight. A sewn through down sweater will do nicely.
- Hat: Wool or fleece
- Sun hat
- Gloves- 2 pairs: 1 pair of lightweight, durable, lined, full-leather palm and fingers. 1 pair of insulated, waterproof, with leather palms and fingers.
- Ice axe: 50-55 cm. **maximum** length. Double check the length of your axe before you arrive. Longer axes are not useful for this itinerary.
- Crampons: 12 point, reasonably sharp
- Prussik slings: Bring pre-tied 7 mm. prussik loops. These can be purchased in Europe as necessary if you haven't constructed a set.
- Climbing harness
- Carabiners: Two locking HMS and one non-locking
- Belay device such as Black Diamond ATC XP
- Climbing helmet
- Headlamp: Bring an LED headlamp with extra new batteries
- Sunglasses: Very dark, with side shields. Spare pair recommended
- Water bottles: 2 one-quart, wide mouth, plastic bottles. For the Matterhorn climb, bring a Camelback type hydration bladder that fits in your pack, with a locking bite valve.
- Sun cream: And lip balm, SPF 15 or higher
- Pack: Internal frame pack with capacity of NO MORE THAN 3,000 cubic inches (30 liters). This should be a compact, streamlined pack. No big McKinley packs, please.
- Suggested second pack: 20-25 liter lightweight summit pack for the Matterhorn
- First aid kit: Each individual should carry a small personal first aid kit to meet their personal needs. Consider the following items: aspirin or Tylenol; Ibuprofen; antacid (Pepto Bismol, Rolaids, etc.); Band-aids; athletic tape; moleskin or Compede.
- Lightweight toilet kit – toothbrush and toothpaste, earplugs for the hut

### Optional items:

- Rock climbing shoes - nice for bad weather options.
- Hiking shorts
- T-shirts
- Small digital camera
- Neck gaiter or light balaclava
- Ski goggles