

The Matterhorn, Zermatt, Switzerland

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Dear Climber,

Thanks for your interest in climbing in the Alps with IMG. The following information contained in this pdf brochure provides information that should answer the majority of 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 or (360) 569-2609. There is limited participation on these programs so we recommend an early application. The order in which your application package is received will determine your participation on the program.

About the program:

We will train on and climb at least two other peaks in the vicinity of Zermatt, Switzerland. The climbing is a progression that culminates in an ascent of the Matterhorn. The first four days of the program includes a team of four climbers led by two IMG internationally certified guides. After initial training at a local crag just above town on day one, we will travel to and then hike in to the Almageller Hut to train further and on day two attempt the Dri Hörnli (3,209m), a fun exposed ridge climb rising right up above the hut. Day three brings the next objective, the Weissmies (4,017m), a lofty peak that involves snow travel turning to rock scrambling and finally a fine snowy knife edge ridge to a final rock summit. A perfect combination of glacier travel, snow climbing and rock climbing that is similar in nature to the Matterhorn. Our final and most important goal will be, of course, the Matterhorn itself. For this ascent, we will add two additional guides for the final three days to allow two days for the entire team to choose the best day to summit and for the guides to lead all four members 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. It is 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:
zermatt.ch/en/Webcams

Dates and Prices

June 28 - July 4, 2020

July 5-11, 2020

Landcost: \$4,500 (Guide Ratio 2:1 days 1-4; 1:1 days 5-7)

Private: \$7,500 (Guide Ratio 1:1)

Group maximum size: **4 climbers, 2 guides** on days 1 to 4; **4 total guides** for days 5-7. 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 and all additional transportation fees including gondola, lift and taxi as needed.

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 physical preparation is mandatory.

Climbing

Knowledge of and the ability to efficiently perform 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 3rd, 4th, and moderate 5th class rock (up to 5.7) over terrain with significant exposure. 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. IMG has specific programs available if you need additional training for this climb.

Accommodations

Accommodations are **not** included in the 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.

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.

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 can help with bookings and connect you with the hotel. We encourage sharing rooms if you are interested in doing so. 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.

REQUIRED Insurance: IMG requires that all* trip participants purchase [Travel Insurance](#) that includes coverage for medical evacuation, repatriation and medical expenses for the duration of their IMG program. Trip Cancellation Insurance is strongly recommended. Trekking and mountaineering programs are true "adventure travel." **The insurance requirement does not apply to IMG customers on programs within the continental USA, but is strongly encouraged.*

Insurance and Travel Arrangements

We invest in insurance coverage for commercial liability and medical and disability insurance for our employees while participating on our programs. We cannot insure you for your personal needs, but we do expect you to be as fiscally responsible as we are. 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 information, please see our page on [cancellation, rescue/repatriation insurance](#) or contact the IMG Office.

International Mountain Guides has worked closely with various travel agents throughout the years and are happy to make recommendations to our customers based on their needs once confirmed on a program.

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. You can 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 in Switzerland. This is a big savings on gondola and lift rides. 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 <https://www.raileurope.com/> or <https://www.sbb.ch/en/home.html> .

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.

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, July, August and early 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. A brief description of each piece of equipment is included to assist you in compiling the proper 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. The 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 (roller bag is nice) 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.

We 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 4,000 meter climbs we will attempt is [The Alpine 4000m Peaks by the Classic Routes](#), by Richard Goedeke, 1991.

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

The Matterhorn Course Itinerary

Zermatt, Switzerland: The Matterhorn and other peaks

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, arriving in the morning and take a train or bus directly from the airport to Zermatt. There is frequent daily train service to Zermatt and charter buses are another option. 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 plan to arrive in Zermatt early, feel free to contact IMG's travel agent, CTT Destinations, IMG@CTTDestinations.com. For specific reservations at the hotel in Zermatt, contact the IMG office for directions.

- 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 ride back down to Zermatt, stopping, perhaps at one of the beer gardens in town for refreshment. Back at the hotel we will retire early. **(hotel reservation required),**
- Day 02** After breakfast the team will catch a pre-arranged taxi for the ride over to the town of Saas Almagell. From here it is a four hour hike up to the Almageller Hut (2898m). As time permits, the group will do some training and cragging on the rock near to the hut. **(overnight in hut)**
- Day 03** Following a continental breakfast of tea, coffee, bread and jam, the team will ascend the Dri Hörnli (3209m), a fun, exposed rock ridge climb rising just above the hut. This multi pitch climb will expose the group to some excellent rock climbing training. The team will make a rappel descent and head back to the hut for a late lunch. **Second night at Almageller Hut.**
- Day 04** the Weismies, an excellent 4,000 meter peak, is the next challenge. The route of ascent is via the southeast ridge, gained after 1 ½ hours hiking up to a pass on the southeast ridge (3298m). Ascend on the west side of the ridge over scree and steeper snow until the ridge is gained again and excellent rock is climbed up to 3900 meters. From here the ridge narrows and becomes snow until a final hump of rock just before the summit at 4017 meters. This will be our final training climb prior to our attempt of the Matterhorn. We will descend the Weismies either back down the route climbed or down the north side via the Trift Glacier. We'll be met by our taxi and ride back to the 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 be joined by two additional guides for the ascent. **(Overnight in hut)**
- Day 06** First summit day for the Matterhorn attempt. The team will have an early morning wake up for a quick breakfast at 4am and make the up to 12-hour round trip climb, then descend to Zermatt. **(optional hotel reservation)**
- Day 07** Second optional day for an ascent of the Matterhorn, and descent to Zermatt. If the team climbs on day 6, day 7 will be available for a climbing or adventure outing as interest dictates. **(required hotel reservation)**

Note: This itinerary is merely a guideline for the trip. The guides 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 unguidable 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 your IMG guides. In addition, the guides will have complete authority over determining each member's continued participation in each of the climbs.

The Matterhorn Required Personal Equipment List

- Boots: Single, lined, technical leather/synthetic climbing boots. A flexible boot is best, one best adapted to alpine rock climbing. Examples: La Sportiva Trango Cube GTX or Scarpa Ribelle.
- Lightweight trail shoe- some prefer these for greater comfort approaching the climbing huts. Example: La Sportiva TX3
- Socks: 2 changes of medium wool or wool/synthetic blend
- Gaiters, short ankle length are best
- Long underwear: Synthetic or wool tops and bottoms
- Pants: Dense weave synthetic stretch climbing pants
- Rain pants: lightweight Gore-Tex or similar with $\frac{3}{4}$ or full length zippers to go on over boots and crampons
- Shirt: long sleeve medium weight synthetic top
- Soft shell jacket or equivalent
- Rain/wind shell: Gore-Tex or similar waterproof/breathable jacket with hood. Lightweight.
- 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
- Neck gaiter, Buff or light balaclava for face protection
- Sun hat
- Gloves- 2 pair
 - 1 pair of durable, lined, full-leather belay gloves. A sturdy glove for handling the fixed ropes on the Matterhorn. Example: Outdoor Research Direct Route Glove
 - 1 pair of warmer insulated waterproof gloves with leather (or grippy synthetic) palms and fingers for stormy days. Example: Outdoor Research Arete Glove
- 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. Examples: Petzl Summ'tek or Black Diamond Venom
- Crampons: 12 point, reasonably sharp. Flexible boots will require the type of binding with a plastic toe and heel piece connected by a binding strap to keep crampons safely attached despite boot flex.
- Climbing harness, lightweight with belay loop, gear loops and adjustable leg loops
- Carabiners: three locking
- Belay device such as Black Diamond ATC XP
- Climbing helmet
- Headlamp: Bring an LED headlamp with extra new batteries
- Sunglasses: Providing full UV protection, with side shields or wraparound
- Ski goggles: useful on windy or stormy summit days
- Water bottles: 2 one-quart, wide mouth, plastic bottles. Option: 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 30 liters (1800 cubic inches). This should be a compact, streamlined pack. No big McKinley packs, please.
- Pack rain cover – great for protecting your pack on those soggy approaches to the climbing hut
- 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; Band-Aids; athletic tape; blister treatment (moleskin, GlacierGel or Band-Aid Blister Cushions).
- Lightweight toilet kit – toothbrush and toothpaste, earplugs for the hut
- Lightweight silk/cotton/or synthetic sleeping bag liner for the huts

Optional items:

- Rock climbing shoes - nice for bad weather options
- Hiking shorts
- T-shirt
- Small digital camera or smart phone for photos