

# MATTERHORN

INFORMATION FOLDER

2021

Many thanks for booking your Matterhorn expedition with us. We're here to do everything possible to make your dream a reality. This is probably the most famous alpine peak in the world, and an ascent is not to be under-estimated. Since the first ascent in 1865 the Matterhorn has been a huge lure for climbers from around the world. While many will talk bravely about it, few will ever stand on the summit.

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### **ITINERARY**

Day 1 – Your trip will start with an evening briefing on the night of your arrival. We will discuss the week ahead and answer any questions you may have before checking/issuing equipment.

Day 2-4 – Usually we acclimatise and train from the Rifugio Torino on the border of Italy and France. This gives good access to numerous quality peaks such as the Aiguille d'Entreves and the Dent du Geant. The Refuge is easily reached via the new Skyway lift, so even if the weather is bad you can still acclimatise easily. There are also fixed ropes on the Aiguille Marbree so you can practise your "Batman" skills before you go to the Dent du Geant. At the end of the training and acclimatisation phase the Guide will decide whether you are ready to attempt the Matterhorn. Please note that the Guide's decision is final. All the Guides have a huge amount of experience, and their priority is your safety. If they don't think that you are ready for the Matterhorn – you're not !

Day 5-8– The summit phase. Usually an ascent of the Matterhorn takes 2 days from Chamonix. However, in order to allow for bad weather we have a spare day. If you're feeling strong there is always the option to add in an extra climb or two in Zermatt before the main event (price to be agreed with the Guide in advance) – however most people want to rest and prepare mentally for the climb. We will also allow for a bad weather/spare day. If we summit on the second to last day then you will have a day off before you travel home. Again, if you wish to climb on the final day then the fee is to be agreed with the Guide in advance.

The climb to the summit can take anywhere from 4 to 5 hours depending on conditions and your speed. Serious scrambling terrain (Grade 3), easy Rock Climbing (UK Diff, US 5.3), and fixed ropes all have to be negotiated. Descent can sometimes take even longer due to the technical nature of the terrain. This can cause some teams to become completely exhausted and require rescue. In order to avoid this, slow teams will be turned around at the Solvay Refuge during the ascent if they do not reach there within 2 hours.

The terrain is rocky nearly all the way from the Hornli Hut to the summit. The upper third often requires the use of crampons. Most of the time you will be scrambling on steep terrain on a short rope to your Guide. Easy sections allow you both to move together, and on more difficult steps the Guide will climb ahead before protecting you using the rope. The fixed ropes are like school gym ropes, and you will need to "Batman" your way up these as quickly as possible to prevent queues forming. In descent you will need to scramble downwards at a good pace in order to make it down in time for a late lunch and the lift back to Zermatt. Your Guide will lower you on some of the steeper sections. A return trip to the Hornli Hut will often take 8-10 hours - this is not a climb for the faint-hearted. After a descent to the lift and a quick drink we will drive back to Chamonix where the real celebrations will hopefully begin.

It is recommended that flights be booked for around lunchtime to avoid needing an early departure.

## EQUIPMENT

Each day you will be wearing the following:

- Mountain Trousers. *Mammut "Base Jump"* (Schoeller fabric) or similar recommended.
- Thermal shirt/T shirt. Merino wool (eg *Icebreaker*) recommended as they don't smell.
- Thick socks. *Smartwool* or *Teko* recommended.
- Mountain Boots. *La Sportiva "Trango"*, *Scarpa "Rebelle"* and similar boots are recommended. Boots must have a rigid sole for crampons. Excellent boots can be hired in Chamonix for around €50/week.
- Fleece/Soft Shell top. *Arc'teryx* recommended.
- Thin gloves. Fleece or leather gloves recommended.
- Gaiters. Gore tex. Black diamond recommended. Ankle length are fine.
- Sunglasses. Category 4 glacier glasses by *Julbo*, *Cebe*, *Vuarnet* and *Adidas* recommended.

You should be carrying the following:

- Waterproof Jacket and Trousers. Gore Tex. *Arc'Teryx* Recommended.
- Warm Gloves. *Black Diamond "Patrol"* Gloves recommended.
- Sun Hat
- Warm Hat
- Goggles. Low light lenses recommended as goggles most likely used in poor weather.
- Packed lunch and drink

- Sun cream and lip salve. SPF >30.
- Blister Kit and personal medication if required. "Compeed" recommended.
- Head torch. *Petzl* "Tika Plus" or similar recommended.
- Ear Plugs (in case of snorers in the huts). Wax ear plugs are far better than foam.
- Compact camera (fully charged)
- Wash kit ie toothbrush, small tube of toothpaste, wet wipes.
- Sheet liner to sleep in. These are mandatory for the Mountain Huts for hygiene reasons. Silk bags are best due to their weight. *Summit to Sea* recommended.
- Antiseptic hand gel – some huts do not have running water to wash with.
- Mitts/warm gloves. *Dachstein* wool mitts recommended, or fleece with Gore Tex shell.
- Duvet Jacket. Synthetic jackets recommended as they stay warm if wet. *Arc'teryx* and *Decathlon* recommended.

#### Technical Equipment:

- Harness. *Black Diamond* "Alpine Bod" and *Beal* "Aero Team III" recommended.
- Helmet. *Petzl* "Ecrin Roc" and *Black Diamond* "Half Dome" recommended.
- Ice Axe. *Grivel* "Air Tech" recommended. The bottom of your axe should reach your shin when held in your hand standing upright.
- Crampons. *Petzl* Vasak and *Grivel* G12 highly recommended.
- Walking Poles. These can be handy when crossing glaciers, and on paths for reducing shock on your knees. *Leki* and *Komperdell* recommended. Snow baskets essential. It is personal preference whether to use one pole or two.
- Rucksack. 30-40 litre maximum.

NB: On the Matterhorn, speed is critical. As a result your rucksack needs to be as light as possible. Every gram counts. Paclite jackets, super light duvets, and lightweight boots can all combine to make the difference between success and failure. This is an opportunity to treat yourself to new kit.

Anyone wishing to hire equipment in Chamonix rather than buy it can do so. We use a local shop for boot hire (allow €50 for the week), and other items are available as follows:

#### EQUIPMENT HIRE PRICES IN €

Ice Axe	20
Harness	13
Helmet	13

Crampons	28
Duvet Jacket	24
Mitts	10

**Full Package: Duvet Jacket, Mitts, Axe, Harness, Crampons, Helmet – €99, payable in cash in Chamonix**

### **Valley Accommodation**

For our Chamonix trips we usually use the Hotel Prieure in Chamonix town centre or the Hotel Louvre. Both offer comfortable accommodation in the heart of the town. Please check with us before you book your accommodation or airport transfer, and remember that access to your room cannot be guaranteed before 3pm (best not to book a flight landing in Geneva before 1pm).

### **Packed Lunches:**

Packed lunches can be collected each morning from a local bakery.

### **Transfers to and from Geneva Airport**

The transfer is approximately 70 minutes. The following company is recommended:

[www.mountaindropoffs.com](http://www.mountaindropoffs.com) When booking use code SMGUIDE15 to receive a discount on your transfer

At the end of the trip, try and arrange your return flight for early afternoon. This will allow you to have breakfast before you leave. Transfers usually leave Chamonix 3 hours before flights depart.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How much does the trip cost ?

The trip costs €2500. There are additional costs, and these are outlined later in this section.

A 20% deposit is payable upon booking via the website.

The balance is required two months before the start of the trip.

### What is included in the week ?

- All Guiding. 3 days at 1:2, and 2 days at 1:1.
- Travel to climbing venues as per the itinerary.
- Parking and incidental expenses.

### What costs extra ?

- Flights
- Transfers
- Mountain Refuges for you and your Guide (allow €450 for 3 nights)
- Mountain Uplift for you and your Guide (allow €200 for the week)
- Insurance
- Equipment hire
- Lunches, snacks, drinks. NB: When in refuges, please look after your Guide.

### Do I need specialist Insurance for the trip ?

Absolutely. To go on an alpine climbing trip without insurance would be foolhardy. Rescue costs and medical bills are something you don't ever want to worry about, so we insist on everyone being fully insured. If you are UK based, then we recommend BMC Insurance - [www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/insurance/Default.aspx](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/modules/insurance/Default.aspx) . If living outside the UK then we recommend World Nomads ([www.worldnomads.com](http://www.worldnomads.com) ).

### What if the trip does not run ?

If the trip does not run, through insufficient bookings, sudden illness, or other unforeseen circumstances, you will be offered a full refund, or transferred onto an expedition with one of our partner firms.

### What are the mountain huts like ?

Mountain Huts are mostly owned by the Alpine Clubs. They are there to provide accommodation and food for mountaineers. They often cater for large numbers (>100), and hence can be quite busy. Meals are usually simple but plentiful, and anyone with special dietary requirements must let us know in advance so we can inform the hut guardian. Please note that while huts will usually try and accommodate vegetarians etc they do sometimes struggle with more specialised requirements such as gluten free. Showers and running water are not usually available. Meals, drinks, and snacks can be purchased for cash. The rooms are usually dormitory style, with large alpine bunks (up to 15 people in a row). Indoor footwear is provided in the refuges so there is no need to take your own.

### **How long are the days ?**

The length of days will vary when Alpine Climbing, but everyone taking part in a Matterhorn trip should expect to be moving for 8-12 hrs per day.

### **How much water should I carry each day ?**

Do not carry too much water – it is very heavy. As a general rule 1-2 litres is the right amount. Avoid using Camel Back style systems with drinking straws. They leak, the tubes freeze, and they will always let you down when you need them most. Nalgene style plastic bottles or plastic lemonade bottles are the best.

### **What type of food should I carry ?**

Everyone is different, however it is essential to eat well in the mountains. Sandwiches are hard to beat, supplemented by fruit and chocolate bars. Don't carry too much food, and remember that some foods will freeze solid unless kept in jacket pockets.

### **What camera should I take ?**

Avoid carrying bulky SLR style cameras. They are too heavy, and slow to use. Compact cameras that fit into a pocket are best. **CAMERAS IN RUCKSACKS NEVER TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS.** Digital cameras and smartphones must be kept warm in a pocket or they will freeze and cease to function.

### **What sun cream do you recommend ?**

Any brand will be fine. The most important thing is the SPF – Do not bother with anything under SPF 30. Creams with UVA and UVB protection are best. Any don't forget lip salve.

### **If there is no water in the huts for washing, what should we do ?**

Take some wet wipes to give yourself a clean in the evening. A toothbrush, some wet wipes, and a small tube of toothpaste (shared between several people) is plenty. Some alcohol hand gel is also handy.

### **How does every company claim to use the best Mountain Guides ?**

We always use the very best Mountain Guides possible. But then every company says that don't they ? To ensure we genuinely do use the best Guides, we pay our Guides well. That way we always have the pick of the very best.

**Are all Mountain Guides certified ?**

All Guides operating in the European Alps must be Internationally Certified. Training and Assessment takes a minimum of three years and anyone caught operating without a license will be prosecuted.

Occasionally we employ trainee guides (known as Aspirants). They are in the final stages of qualifying as Guides and are allowed to operate under the tutorage of an experienced Guide.

**Where can I get a packed lunch for each day ?**

Before leaving Chamonix you can buy lunch from a local bakery. Once in the mountains you can buy a good packed lunch from the Mountain Refuge (don't forget to order the night before).