

A full-page photograph of the Matterhorn mountain peak, a prominent jagged peak with a sharp summit, partially covered in snow and illuminated by warm, golden light. The peak is reflected in a calm lake in the foreground. The surrounding landscape is rugged and rocky, with some snow patches. The sky is a pale, clear blue.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE CLIMBING THE  
MATTERHORN?**

# WHAT'S IT LIKE CLIMBING THE MATTERHORN?

The Matterhorn is a highly sought-after peak that occupies plenty of space in the minds of adventurers around the world. If you fall into this category, it's only natural to find yourself asking a rather simple question from time to time: What is it like to climb The Matterhorn? Well, in this blog, Adventure Base gives you the detailed answer you need to kickstart your adventure!

Our team has scaled The Matterhorn numerous times, so our words are backed by real-world experience. This has allowed us to build and refine a week-long Matterhorn guided ascent as part of our Alps peak summit tours.

Scroll down to find out what it's like climbing The Matterhorn! And if any questions come to mind as we go, please just get in touch.

## THE MATTERHORN: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The Matterhorn, with its unmistakable pyramidal shape, is one of the most iconic peaks in the world. Towering at 4,478 metres (14,692 feet) above sea level, it sits on the border between Switzerland and Italy and has become a symbol of the Alps. Its unique structure and storied past make it a dream destination for mountaineers from across the globe.

First climbed in 1865 by Edward Whymper and his team, the Matterhorn's history is steeped in triumph and tragedy, making it not just a physical climb but also an emotional and historical journey. Its distinctive profile is visible for miles and its silhouette is instantly recognisable, making it a hallmark of mountaineering excellence.

Each year, approximately 3,000 climbers successfully reach the Matterhorn's summit. The average climb takes between eight to 12 hours round-trip from the base camps, depending on the chosen route and the climber's experience. Known as "The Mountain of Mountains," the Matterhorn's allure lies in its challenging ascent and the breathtaking views that reward those who dare to reach its summit.





## WHAT IS THE TECHNICAL DIFFICULTY OF A MATTERHORN CLIMB?

Climbing the Matterhorn is not for the faint-hearted. It's a technical and demanding ascent that requires prior mountaineering experience. The most popular route, the Hörnli Ridge (Hörnligrat), involves a combination of scrambling and climbing with exposure to steep drops. Climbers must navigate sections of rock climbing rated up to UIAA Grade III-IV, which require skill and confidence on both rock and mixed terrain.

While not classified as an extreme climb by technical standards, the sheer length of the route and the combination of physical, mental, and technical challenges make it a serious undertaking. Climbers should be proficient in using crampons and an ice axe, comfortable with exposed ridges, and prepared for route-finding challenges. On our Matterhorn guided ascent page, you can find more information about the kit you will need to use in the section "Equipment Required for This Climb".

Fitness is paramount for a Matterhorn ascent. Summit day demands eight to 12 hours of strenuous climbing, often at high altitudes, which can intensify the effects of fatigue. Acclimatisation is critical to reduce the risk of altitude sickness and to ensure peak performance during the climb.



## WHAT IS EXPOSURE LIKE ON THE MATTERHORN?

The Matterhorn is infamous for its exposure. Climbing it means traversing narrow ridges with steep drops on either side and navigating vertical rock faces with minimal room for error. These exposed sections are thrilling for seasoned climbers but can be nerve-wracking for those unaccustomed to such heights.



The psychological challenge of exposure is as significant as the physical demands. Even experienced climbers must maintain focus and composure throughout the climb. Safety is paramount, with climbers relying on secure belays, rope work, and their guides to ensure every step is carefully calculated.

But the exposure also provides one of the Matterhorn's most breathtaking rewards: unrivalled, panoramic views of the surrounding Alps, including peaks like Mont Blanc, the Monte Rosa massif, and the Weisshorn. For many, this visual feast makes every nerve-testing moment worthwhile.

The Haute Route — one of the world's greatest multi-day treks — connects Zermatt and the Matterhorn with Chamonix and Mont Blanc. Completing the route is another unmissable way to explore this stunning region, and you can do exactly that on our 11-day Haute Route guided trek.



## OPT FOR A MATTERHORN GUIDED ASCENT

For most climbers, a guided ascent of the Matterhorn is the safest and most efficient way to tackle this legendary peak. Partnering with an experienced guide, like those at Adventure Base, dramatically improves your chances of success while ensuring your safety on the mountain.

At Adventure Base, our Matterhorn guided climb is designed to prepare you for the unique challenges of this ascent. Our guides are not only experts in mountaineering but also intimately familiar with the Matterhorn's routes, weather patterns, and terrain. They'll provide hands-on instruction during training climbs, teach essential techniques, and handle route-finding so you can focus on the climb itself.

Our week-long itinerary includes acclimatisation and training days on rocky ridges and peaks, such as Arête des Cosmiques and Arête à Laurence to name a few of the possible options. Thanks to great logistical infrastructure, we get to access this great area via the famous Chamonix valley where we spend three days acclimatising and preparing for the Matterhorn summit.

With the guidance of our team, you'll tackle the mountain with confidence, making the most of your adventure.



## THE FOUR ROUTES TO THE MATTERHORN'S SUMMIT

The Matterhorn offers several routes to the summit, each with its own challenges and rewards. Here's an overview of the four primary routes:

### Hörnli Ridge (Hörnligrat)

- The most popular route, accessed from Zermatt.
- This is the route we take on our [Matterhorn guided climb](#).



- Features a mix of scrambling, climbing, and fixed ropes.
- Best suited for climbers with some prior experience in rock climbing and exposed terrain.

### **Lion Ridge (Cresta del Leone)**

- Approached from the Italian side, starting near Cervinia.
- Known for its rugged beauty and slightly more challenging technical sections than the Hörnli Ridge.

### **Zmutt Ridge**

- A quieter, more remote route from Zermatt.
- Demands a higher level of technical ability and stamina.
- Less crowded but requires more commitment than the Hörnli Ridge.

### **North Face**

- The Matterhorn's most challenging and prestigious route.
- Reserved for expert climbers with significant ice and mixed climbing experience.
- Often tackled in winter conditions, making it one of the Alps' ultimate test pieces.

Regardless of the route, preparation and guidance are crucial to successfully summiting the Matterhorn. If you're still open to other adventures in the Alps, consider reading our blog [How Difficult is it to Climb Mont Blanc?](#) Find out if Western Europe's highest peak is for you!



# WHAT ARE THE CLOSEST RESORTS TO THE MATTERHORN?

The Matterhorn's proximity to world-class alpine resorts makes it an accessible and attractive destination for climbers and non-climbers alike.

## ZERMATT, SWITZERLAND

Zermatt is the primary gateway to the Matterhorn. This charming car-free resort town offers a perfect blend of modern amenities and alpine tradition. With its lively atmosphere, excellent dining options, and stunning views of the Matterhorn, Zermatt is a fantastic base for climbers. The Hörnli Hut, the starting point for the Hörnli Ridge, is accessible from Zermatt via a combination of cable cars and hiking.

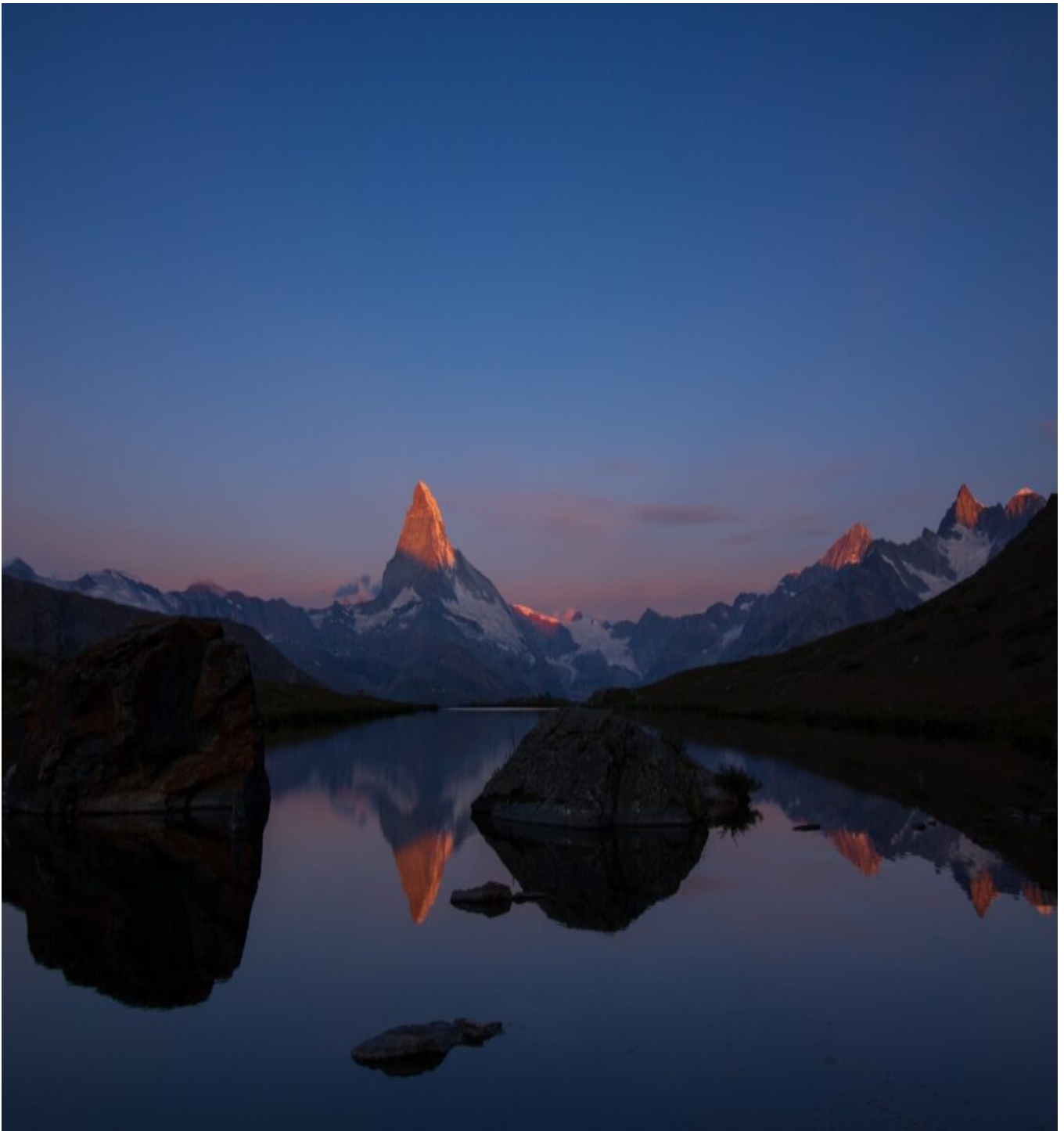
In addition to mountaineering, Zermatt offers world-class skiing, hiking, and a rich cultural scene, making it a destination worth exploring even if you're not climbing.

## CHAMONIX, FRANCE

While not as close as Zermatt, Chamonix is another popular base for this alpine adventure. Situated just a couple of hours' drive from Zermatt, Chamonix offers easy access to other iconic experiences, like Mont Blanc guided climbs. The resort's vibrant mountaineering community, excellent training opportunities, and stunning alpine scenery make it a great place to prepare for or recover from a Matterhorn climb.

Chamonix's cable cars, including the famous Aiguille du Midi, provide stunning vistas and access to high-altitude terrain, making it a must-visit for any alpine enthusiast.





## **DON'T MISS OUT ON OUR MATTERHORN GUIDED ASCENTS!**

So, what's it like climbing The Matterhorn? We hope we've answered the question in enough detail for you to start planning your adventure! Find out more about our week-long Matterhorn guided climb, including the itinerary, training plans, preparation courses, accommodation options, and more.

Do you have any pre-booking questions for us? Please just get in touch for the answers you need.