



HIKING THE MATTERHORN, SWITZERLAND: VILLAGE-BASED WALKING/HIKING TOUR

MEET: Zermatt
VISIT: Zermatt, Zinal
LENGTH: 7 days, 6 nights
HIKE RATING: Moderate–Strenuous, 5–7 hours/day,
1000'–3500' elevation gain/loss

The Matterhorn is perhaps the most famous mountain in the Alps, and no mountain is more captivating than this giant. This week-long tour covers the second week of the longer Jungfrau + Matterhorn tour. It takes us to the storybook village of Zermatt, at the foot of the mighty Matterhorn, and then on to quiet Zinal, tucked at the end of the nearby Anniviers valley. The Matterhorn dominates an area of surprising richness—one which includes dozens of the tallest, most majestic peaks in the Swiss Alps. Our walks will lead us to wild gorges, colorful flowers, peaceful lakes surrounded by soft larch forests, and enchanting, traditional alpine hamlets. Zinal is another gem—a quiet hideaway near many of Europe's highest mountains. This is truly a hiker's paradise!

While hiking in Zermatt and Zinal, we have literally dozens of hikes to choose from each day. We've described some of our favorite hikes here, but expect your own tour to vary slightly.

DAY ONE

Arrive in Switzerland, and transfer by train to our meeting point in Zermatt. There is a train station in both the Zurich and Geneva airports, and transferring to Zermatt (4 hours) will be as easy as it is scenic. You'll have a chance to check out the town, take a short walk around Zermatt, or enjoy the wonderful pool and spa before settling in for our welcome dinner at the very friendly Hotel Europe. (Hotel Europe)

DAY TWO

It's nice to start with a walking tour of the village that takes you past 400 year-old houses and into the history of this fascinating town. Then perhaps up to the Findeln glacier, hiking through larch forests and passing numerous small lakes with the Matterhorn towering in the distance. Afterwards, we'll enjoy exquisite food and great Matterhorn views from our hotel on the outskirts of Zermatt. (Hotel Europe)

DAY THREE

Taking quiet trails through fields and forest, we have a range of choices up to the wide ridge of Gornergrat, past marmots and small glacial lakes, to what has to be one of the finest viewpoints in Europe. The jumbled mass of the Gorner glacier stretches out before us, and behind that, Dom, Monte Rosa, the Breithorn, and the Matterhorn form a spectacular backdrop. (Hotel Europe)

DAY FOUR

There are many peaceful trails criss-crossing the larch forests outside of Zermatt. We'll take one that leads us to a suspended wooden walkway through a narrow river gorge. After a harrowing walk through the gorge, we emerge and continue on to the enchanting, centuries-old hamlets of Zum See and Zmutt. Perhaps we'll make the strenuous climb to the Schwarzsee lake, or even up to the Hornli hut (a sort of Matterhorn base camp) to enjoy fabulous, close-up views of the Matterhorn and a sweeping look back at the valley below. (Hotel Europe)

DAY FIVE

Leaving Zermatt, scenic train and bus ride in the morning brings you to the end of a neighboring valley and the quiet village of Leukerbad. Here you'll enjoy the slower pace of this tiny village to go with great moun-



HIKING THE MATTERHORN, SWITZERLAND: VILLAGE-BASED WALKING/HIKING TOUR

tain views. One short hike leads toward the end of the valley to Fluekapelle, a tiny chapel tucked below impressive cliffs. (Hotel Escher)

DAY SIX

A long and dramatic hike climbs leads up a serpentine path to the historic Gemmipass. Visit a small inn on the edge of an alpine lake and savor the high mountain views before returning to the village by cablecar for a soak in one of the thermal spas. (Hotel Escher)

DAY SEVEN

After breakfast at our hotel, we'll say our good-byes and leave for our post-trip destinations.