

Walking holidays in Europe



Walking holiday in the Valais



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7 NIGHTS / 8 DAYS

HIGHLIGHTS

- A choice of 6 self-guided walking itineraries
- Matterhorn Trail
- Five Lakes Walk
- Charles Kuonen Suspension Bridge
- Botanical Nature Trail
- Matterhorn Glacier Trail
- One wine tasting at your hotel
- 6-day Peak Pass



The Matterhorn

This seven-night self-guided walking holiday invites you to explore the area around one of Switzerland's most iconic mountains – the Matterhorn. The sharp features of this pyramidal peak rise clearly above the surroundings, touching the sky at 4,478 metres above sea level. The charming mountain resort of Zermatt sits in the narrow valley underneath the majestic mountain, and it is here that you are based for the next week. Our included walks use a combination of mountain railways such as the Gornergratbahn and cable cars to access the higher altitudes. The routes promise exceptional views of the mountains, sparkling lakes with mirrored reflections, lunar-like glacier landscapes, a thrilling suspension bridge and pretty, alpine meadows where you might be lucky enough to spot edelweiss flowers. Return to your hotel each evening to relax and enjoy the lively atmosphere in this popular chalet town.

HOTEL INCLUDED

Parkhotel Beau Site, Zermatt 4 star (5 star option at the Zermatterhof)

PRICES

From £2,570 per person including air and rail

From £2,645 per person including rail from London and back

Sample prices are per person based on two people sharing a double or twin room for 7 nights.

First class upgrade possible including standard premier on the Eurostar from London to Paris return at £320 per person. Fly-rail first class supplement for rail travel in Switzerland £150 per person.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Scheduled flights with British Airways from London to Geneva return, economy
- Return rail travel from Geneva airport to Zermatt
- 7 nights' bed and breakfast in a double room with Matterhorn view at the Parkhotel Beau Site in Zermatt
- One wine tasting at the hotel
- SBB half-fare card
- 6-day Peak Pass
- Route notes for self-guided walking itineraries in the Valais
- Concierge service and Expressions Holidays regional helpful hints

THE JOURNEY AND HOW YOU GET THERE

There are flights with British Airways from London Heathrow to Geneva several times a day. From here there are regular hourly services via Brig to Zermatt. Travel by rail from the UK starts with taking the Eurostar to Paris. Here you can either take the TGV-Lyria to Basel and travel south via Brig to Zermatt or take the more southerly route to Lausanne before heading east to Brig and Zermatt. We recommend a circular trip taking one route there and a different one back.

DATES

Although this holiday can be arranged throughout the year, we recommend travelling between June and early October for the best trekking conditions.

HOLIDAY CODE

FHCH03

DAY ONE Arrive in Zermatt

This holiday can be arranged with flights from the UK to Switzerland or with rail travel from London to Switzerland. If travelling by air, your holiday starts with a flight to Geneva airport where you catch a direct train to Brig. This is a very scenic stretch along the northern edge of Lake Geneva, passing through the towns of Lausanne and Montreux as well as the pretty lakeside Chillon Castle. Change at Brig onto the Matterhorn Gotthard railway which heads up the narrow valley to Zermatt. Around 4 hours after leaving Geneva airport, the unmistakable shape of the Matterhorn appears overhead and you pull into Zermatt station. If travelling from the UK by rail, you leave London on a morning Eurostar to Paris at around 8am. Take a local taxi from Gare du Nord to Gare de Lyon and catch the afternoon TGV-Lyria service to Basel. You arrive here mid-afternoon and head south via Brig to Zermatt. The hotel will send a complimentary shuttle to collect you from the train station and you check-in to your room to settle in and relax after the day of travelling.

DAY TWO The Matterhorn Trail

Your first walk in the Valais region is a themed trail which gives you a fantastic introduction to this iconic Swiss mountain. The trail guides you down the hillside from Schwarzsee to Zermatt via the quaint village of Zmutt, a distance of around 10 kilometres. Information signs along the route, accompanied by carved wooden sculptures, teach more about the origins of the mountain and the stories and legends which surround it. Highlights of the trail include the pretty chapels at Schwarzsee and in Zmutt as well as the excellent views of the Matterhorn's north face. You start your day by taking the lift from Zermatt to Schwarzsee where the trail begins. From here you steadily descend across the open mountainside and drop below the treeline. This section of the walk takes you through a beautiful larch forest with regular openings giving stunning views of the glaciers, Weisshorn and Matterhorn itself. You cross the Zmuttbach River and might like to detour into Zmutt for lunch or to try the cheese produced here before continuing down the wide path back to Zermatt. The walk should take around 3.5 hours but stopping for lunch in Zmutt is highly recommended.

DAY THREE The Five Lakes Walk

The second walking day in Zermatt is given to the sublime Five Lakes Walk (5-Seenweg). This trail is perhaps the most popular of Zermatt's 400km of trails and offers amazing scenery over a 9-kilometre route. As suggested in the name, the easy hike passes by the five mountain lakes of Stellisee, Grindjisee,



The Matterhorn above Zermatt

Grünsee, Moosjisee, and Leisee. Three of these lakes reflect the Matterhorn on a still day and the view from Stellisee is one of the most famous pictures of the region. You start the day by taking the underground funicular from Zermatt to Sunnegga and switch onto a gondola to take you up the last section to Blauherd. The gondola station here is about 2,580 metres above sea level and the vast majority of today's walk is downhill with a small ascent at the end. The view from Blauherd is amazing with the valley spread below, framed by rocky mountains, glaciers and the ever-present Matterhorn peak. The trail leads you on wide tracks and dirt paths through a colourful landscape of greens, oranges and greys. The five lakes have different feels with some larger and open and others smaller, more rugged and sheltered by trees. After the third lake you reach a mountain lodge with restaurant where you can stock up on snacks before descending steeply through the forest to the milky-blue lake at Moosjisee. The last section of the trail is the most challenging as you climb about 150 metres back up the slope to the last lake and Sunnegga station. Take plenty of time to absorb the beautiful surroundings before heading back to Zermatt on the funicular.

DAY FOUR At leisure

We include two rest days within this walking holiday, although of course you can choose to swap the days around as you please. We recommend using one of these days to visit the Matterhorn Glacier Paradise at Klein Matterhorn. The Glacier Paradise is reached via the world's highest 3S cableway which

takes visitors to a height of 3,821 metres above sea level. Your Peak Pass covers you for this trip, however guests may like to pay a small supplement to travel in one of the Crystal Ride carriages which have a glass floor for views of the glacier 170 metres below. At the station you will find the world's highest ice palace – a fairy-tale world of glittering crystals with an ice slide, glacier crevasse and plenty of photo opportunities. There is also a viewing platform with panoramic views of 14 glaciers and 38 four-thousand-metre peaks, cinema lounge showing short films about alpinism, flora, fauna and the cable cars in this area. Enjoy a traditional and hearty lunch in the ultra-modern restaurant and pick up a souvenir for loved ones at home before heading back down the mountain to Zermatt.

DAY FIVE The Matterhorn Glacier Trail

Your third walking itinerary is an amazing trail which takes you through a barren land of rock, ice and snow following the Matterhorn Glacier Trail. The surroundings are dramatic and a completely different from the vibrant meadows and flowers of the previous hikes. The 6-kilometre trail offers hikers an insight into the retreat of the Furgg and Theodul Glaciers and the landscape left behind. There are information panels along the route displaying the effects of the ice on the geological forms, flora and fauna and human life. The route starts by taking the cable car from Zermatt to Furi and onwards to Trockener Steg. A small sign directs you from the station to the Theodul Glacier lake where you can often see a mirrored image of the Matterhorn above. Over the next 4 kilometres

are mostly downhill along a stony path which weaves its way past lots of small lakes that have been left behind by the glaciers. The trail is rocky underfoot but is quite easy to follow, flat for the most part and allows you to get up close to the Matterhorn without requiring any extreme hiking. You cross a stream and rise up the slope on the other side to reach the Hornli ski lift. Your path then drops downhill again to reach the chapel, lake and station at Schwarzsee. Those with enough energy can choose to extend the trip by another 6 kilometre / 2.5 hours, turning left at Hornli and following the loose trail up the steep ridge to Hornlihutte – climbers' base for those attempting to climb the Matterhorn. You return from Schwarzsee to Zermatt by taking the lift back down the hillside.

DAY SIX At leisure

There are plenty of options for your second rest day which probably starts with a relaxed breakfast at your hotel. You might like to visit the Zermatlantis Matterhorn Museum which offers an insight into the development of the village and documents the triumph and tragedy which accompanied the first ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865. Zermatt has a uniquely high concentration of gourmet restaurants and no visit to the Swiss Alps should be complete without having treated yourself to a traditional fondue or raclette. The afternoon might be spent relaxing at your hotel, making the most of the pool and wellness facilities or perhaps take the cable car to the summit of the Rothorn for more fantastic views and to see the Peak Collection, a permanent art exhibition at the summit. This is a popular area for paragliding on still days and you can often see them circling on thermals high above. Return to Zermatt in the afternoon and enjoy a wine tasting with the hotel's sommelier.

DAY SEVEN Randa Suspension Bridge or Botanical Nature Trail

Your last walking day in Zermatt gives a choice of two trails, both of which have significant sections of ascent and are therefore more strenuous than the previous walks. Those with a head for heights and a lust for adventure start the day by heading on the train down the valley to the town of Randa. From here, an 8.6 km hike takes visitors through larch forests to the Hohtschugga viewpoint and then reaches the Charles Kuonen Suspension Bridge. The pedestrian bridge spans 494 metres making it the longest of its kind anywhere in the world, running 85 metres above the Grabengufer below. Swaying walkers will take nearly 10 minutes to cross the aerial pathway, stopping regularly to let others pass in the other



Landscape near Zermatt

direction and admire the jaw-dropping views below. The hike to the bridge is resolutely uphill and requires an altitude gain of nearly 1,000m which is well worth the effort. It's possible to add a short detour to visit the Europa hut before returning to Randa on a circular route. If the idea of a swaying pathway through the sky does not appeal, hikers might prefer to choose the Botanical Nature Trail which heads uphill from Zermatt. This route is around 4 km each way and leads through high alpine pastures to Trift. This trail is the polar opposite of the Matterhorn Glacier Trail as you walk through verdant alpine pastures, ablaze with flowers of every variety. Blossoms include various species of orchid, anemone and pasque flower as well as edelweiss and gentian and support a host of butterflies and other insects. You will pass the Pension Edelweiss guesthouse on your way up the valley which is an excellent place to spot the local ibex colony. The top of the path brings you to the charming hotel at Trift where you can stop for lunch or a snack. The route will probably take around 2.5 hours from Zermatt to Trift but is much quicker on the way back down. Return to Zermatt in the afternoon and spend the rest of the day relaxing at your hotel.

DAY EIGHT Travel back to the UK

You enjoy a final breakfast at your hotel before starting your journey home. If flying back from Geneva airport you have time for a relaxed breakfast before retracing your steps via Brig to catch an afternoon flight home. If returning to the UK by rail we recommend leaving the

hotel around 9.30am and taking a route home via Brig and Lausanne, instead Basel. This allows you to admire the majestic form of the French Alps and Lake Geneva before heading back through the French countryside. You change onto the Eurostar at Paris and arrive back in London about 9.30pm.

HOTELS

In this walking holiday we include a seven night stay in Zermatt.

Other options in the Valais are available on request, and additional nights can be added here or in other destinations.

Expressions

PARKHOTEL BEAU SITE

4 star

The four star Parkhotel Beau Site in Zermatt brings a touch of grandeur to the Swiss chalet style. With views of the Matterhorn, the hotel stands in a privileged elevated position overlooking the Alpine village below. The facade of the main hotel building combines golden stone, a cream plaster, and the glass of the conservatory through which you enter. Wrought iron balconies adorn almost every storey, and in the centre at the top, the semi-circular window of the hotel's grandest suite adds even more architectural interest. Initial impressions are of elegance and a pervading sense of luxury. Beside the main hotel building stands a more traditional wooden chalet, in-keeping with the design of many of Zermatt's houses. Here, guests will find the Alpine Chic rooms, an excellent option for those looking for extra privacy and the exclusivity of a boutique hotel. The Classic suites and guestrooms have been designed in a way that blends cosy, warm Swiss style with large, light, airy spaces. White walls and wide windows keep the rooms fresh and cool, but rich carpets and fabrics and wooden panels and furnishings remind guests of their location. Higher room categories, situated in the roof, feature striking light wood beams, and introduce a complementary dark blue in the plush sofas and bed linen. In the Tower Suite, a glass spiral staircase takes centre stage. Alpine Chic rooms feature a more modern colour combination of red and silver or charcoal grey. Dark wood still makes an appearance, as do the stunning views of the snow-capped mountains. Dine in the elegant Beau Site Restaurant on at least one evening. Fresh Swiss cuisine is served either in the grand main dining room under chandeliers and beamed wooden walls and ceilings, or in the more relaxed dining room, which has the distinct feel of a cosy mountain lodge. Here, two-storey wooden-panelled walls are delicately carved, and the vaulted ceiling is atmospherically lit by warm hidden lights, which add to the homely feel of the mezzanine level. After dinner, enjoy live music in the Piano Bar, furnished with comfortable leather armchairs and vintage bar stools. The ambience of the bar is completed by the



Parkhotel Beau Site

arched ceiling and doorways, and the unique style of wooden floor. Guests are also free to use the Wellness and Beauty centre, complete with large swimming pool, two whirlpools tucked away under an exposed rock wall, and tranquil treatment rooms. Relax in the sauna, looking out across the mountains, or beside the panoramic windows of the winter garden in one of the large armchairs. A stay of a few nights or a week at the Parkhotel Beau Site gives you plenty of time to relax and enjoy the facilities available at the hotel, the comfort of your room, and to then explore the walking trails and village of Zermatt.

Hotel facilities and services

Beau Site Restaurant, Lounge and Terrace, Piano Bar, Swimming Pool, Sauna, Massages, Hammam, Beauty Treatments, Whirlpools, Winter Garden, Lawn.

Facts in brief

Official star rating 4

Location The hotel is located in the heart of Zermatt

Closest airport Geneva Airport

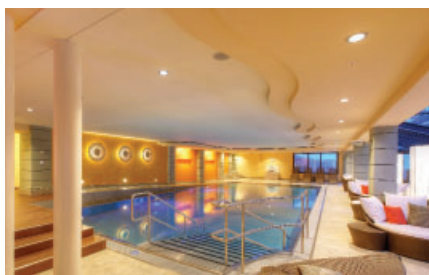
Distance from airport The hotel is under 3-hours' drive from Geneva Airport

Closest railway station Zermatt Station

Distance from railway station The hotel is about 10-minutes' walk from Zermatt Station



Parkhotel Beau Site



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OUR PRICES

The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, transport fares and hotel rates can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators) and ABTA.



Expressions Holidays
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HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

01392 441250

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process. A deposit is required to confirm the arrangements and this can be paid by debit or credit card over the phone. The level of the deposit will be confirmed at the point of booking.