

The Matterhorn

The Matterhorn is a mountain of the Alps, straddling the main watershed and border between Switzerland and Italy. It is a large, near-symmetrical pyramidal peak in the extended Monte Rosa area of the Pennine Alps, whose summit is 14,692 ft high, making it one of the highest summits in the Alps and Europe.[note 3] The four steep faces, rising above the surrounding glaciers, face the four compass points and are split by the Hörnli, Furggen, Leone/Lion, and Zmutt ridges. The mountain overlooks the Swiss town of Zermatt, in the canton of Valais, to the north-east and the Italian town of Breuil-Cervinia in the Aosta Valley to the south. Just east of the Matterhorn is Theodul Pass, the main passage between the two valleys on its north and south sides, and a trade route since the Roman Era.

Because of its position on the main Alpine watershed and its great height, the Matterhorn is exposed to rapid weather changes. In addition, the steep faces of the mountain and its isolated location make it prone to banner clouds formation, with the air flowing around the mountain producing condensation of the air on the lee side and also creating vortices.

Since the eighteenth century, the Alps have attracted more and more people and fascinated generations of explorers and climbers. The Matterhorn remained relatively little known until 1865, but the successful ascent followed by the tragic accident of the expedition led by Edward Whymper caused a rush on the mountains surrounding Zermatt.

The construction of the railway linking the village of Zermatt from the town of Visp started in 1888. The first train reached Zermatt on July 18, 1891 and the entire line was electrified in 1930. Since 1930 the village is directly connected to St. Moritz by the Glacier Express panoramic train. However there is no

connection with the village of Breuil-Cervinia on the Italian side. Travelers have to hire mountain guides to cross the 3,300 metres high glaciated Theodul Pass, separating the two resorts. The town of Zermatt remains almost completely free of internal combustion vehicles and can be reached by train only. (Apart from the local police service which uses a Volkswagen car, only electric vehicles are used locally).

[<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matterhorn>]

