

ABOUT THE TRAIL

- **DISTANCE** 9.1 km (5.7 mi)
- **DURATION** 5 to 6 hours
- **TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN** 744 m (2,411 ft)
- **LEVEL** Challenging

Zermatt, surrounded by the finest peaks and many of the finest hikes in Switzerland, is a region of superlatives. But there is one hike that showcases all of Zermatt’s jewels from their best sides, immersing you right in the center of the grand arena of glaciated peaks and offering some of the most exceptional views in all of the Alps. Although not an easy route—it climbs to above 3,500 m (11,483 ft) and there is some easy rock scrambling along the way—it is well within the capabilities of experienced hikers and does not quite cross over the boundary into full-blown alpinism. But it certainly feels like a real climb as you reach the summit in the midst of one of the biggest systems of glaciers in the Alps.

This hike begins from the Gornergrat railway station, the highest terminal of the famous Gornergrat Bahn. At 3,089 m (10,135 ft), this hike’s starting point is already at a higher elevation than most other routes in this book, making good weather essential. You will want clear skies to make the most of the views, too. With its shops and restaurants, Gornergrat may feel out of place in a location that would be stunningly remote without rail access, but it offers the chance for anyone to appreciate something of the views this hike affords.

Hohtälligrat is the name given to the ridge continuing eastward from Gornergrat toward the summit of Stockhorn, but the straightforward hike you will see in the tourist brochures stops at the minor subsidiary top of Hohtälli at 3,275 m (10,745 ft). Our version, which is more challenging but also significantly better, drawing the hiker deeper into the mountain world of glaciers and snowfields, continues along the ridge to its highest point: Stockhorn, a 3,532 m (11,588 ft) summit with one of the best views accessible to the nonexpert mountaineer.

Begin from Zermatt by buying a return ticket along the Gornergrat Bahn to Gornergrat itself. The train journey is one of the most spectacular in the world, so be sure to get a seat on the right-hand side of the car for the best views. The train climbs steeply uphill through forests and then across open hill-sides, stopping at several minor stations before arriving at the Gornergrat complex. This region can be bewilderingly busy in summer, but take a few steps outside the train station and climb up a rocky footpath leading east and you will soon be in peace and quiet again. The views from here are already superb, but there are better to come.

Find the path that heads along the ridge, descending slightly to begin with on an easy, well-worn trail and often passing areas of cairns and rock art created by visitors. To the south, views of the impressive expanse of the Gorner Glacier open up. The vast expanse of ice stretching to its encircling peaks is quite something to behold, and on a bright day, its heavily crevassed surface



↑ Looking out over the glacial wonderland from Monte Rosa to Lyskamm, Castor, Pollux, and Breithorn.  
↘ Ascending the final rocky ridge to the summit of Stockhorn, with Monte Rosa beyond.

**“The hike continues along the ridge to its highest point: Stockhorn, a 3,532 m (11,588 ft) summit with one of the best views accessible to the nonexpert mountaineer.”**

