

>

CONQUERING PREJUDICES – WOMEN ON THE MATTERHORN

Olivia Jane Wood sets out to honor Lucy Walker's first ascent of the Matterhorn that she accomplished 150 years ago



On July 22 1871, exactly 150 years ago, British mountaineer Lucy Walker became the first woman to reach the summit of the iconic Matterhorn in Switzerland. A milestone in global alpinism that gave women a face in the world of mountain sports. To celebrate this remarkable pioneering achievement, British mountaineer Olivia Jane Wood, together with mountain expert Mammut, plans to repeat the feat and conquer the "Horu" (locals' name) in honor of her fellow countrywoman Lucy Walker.

Mammut athlete Olivia Jane Wood spent most of her childhood in Zermatt, the same village that was the starting point for Lucy Walker's ascent to the Matterhorn in 1871. Her family bred St Bernard dogs to support the mountain rescue teams in the area, fuelling her passion for mountains and adventure. "The mountain was omnipresent in my family's life," Olivia Jane says. "For me, the Matterhorn is the most iconic mountain, and it has always been my dream to climb it. This history-making 150th anniversary is the perfect occasion to do it." On August 12 2021, precisely 150 years and three weeks after Lucy Walker became the first woman to

stand on the 4478-meter summit and write alpine history, Olivia Jane wants to fulfil her lifelong dream. Albeit under entirely different circumstances.

Women in mountain sports

Females like Lucy Walker had a hard time in mountain sports back in the 19th even well into the 20th century, despite already having achieved outstanding feats. Today, acceptance is a lot greater, but alpine sports are still male-dominated. Olivia Jane wants to use her story to motivate women to pursue their goals and continue to bring a breath of fresh air into alpinism and the sport of climbing. "For me, mountaineering is about achieving something collectively that you wouldn't otherwise be able to do on your own. The story of Lucy Walker and Meta Brevoort fascinates me for that very reason," Olivia adds. Like Lucy Walker, the US-American Meta Brevoort also had the ambitious goal of being the first woman to stand on the Matterhorn. Their unique dual quest ended so closely that Meta learns of Lucy's first ascent when arriving in the Mattertal with the same intention. Lucy Walker's victory, however, gave Meta the extra motivation she needed. A few weeks later, Meta Brevoort becomes the first woman to traverse the Matterhorn from Zermatt to Breuil (Cervinia), Italy. In the following two weeks, she becomes the first woman to stand on the 4506-meter Weisshorn and the 4357-meter Dent Blanche. "They spurred each other on towards peak performance and made history as women in alpinism. That motivates me immensely, too," says Olivia Jane, who will tackle the project under entirely different conditions.

From flannel skirts to high-tech equipment

Over the past 150 years, not only has society's acceptance of females on the mountain changed considerably but so has the equipment. Unlike Lucy in her flannel skirt back then, Olivia Jane will tackle the route to the summit of the Matterhorn dressed in highly technical mountain sportswear from Mammut. Products designed for radical and extreme conditions in high alpine terrain are essential – the mountain has changed a lot since Lucy's pioneering feat. Climate change is also making itself felt on the Matterhorn – the permafrost is gradually thawing, and the glacial cover disappears. Among other things, this instability increases the risk of rockslides. "Detailed planning, local mountain guides, in-depth and targeted preparation and safety equipment are a must," says Olivia. Olivia sums up the requirements for a successful ascent. "We simply wait for the right weather conditions," she adds with a smile of anticipation.

More inspirations & reading

- Interview with Olivia Jane Wood in German, English, French
- Swiss Tourism media dossier about women on the mountain
- Comparing mountain equipment and clothing from the past to the present → illustrates the changes in mountain sports concretely

About Mammut

Mammut is a Swiss outdoor company founded in 1862, providing mountain sports enthusiasts worldwide with high-quality products and unique brand experiences. For nearly 160 years, the world's leading premium brand has stood for safety and pioneering innovation. Mammut products combine functionality and performance with contemporary design. Mammut is one of the complete suppliers in the outdoor market with its hardware, footwear, and apparel combination. Mammut Sports Group AG is active in around 40 countries and employs approximately 800 people.
mammut.com