



ADVENTURE
BASE

FINDING YOUR PERFECT BASE FOR ALPINE ADVENTURES

A TRUE MOUNTAIN EXPERIENCE VS. HOTEL COMFORTS

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REFUGE LIFE: WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW IT DIFFERS FROM HOTELS

Whether you're trekking the Tour du Mont Blanc, the famous Haute Route between Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn, tackling the Dolomites Alta Via 1, or scaling peaks like Gran Paradiso or Monte Rosa, you'll likely find yourself spending a few nights in mountain refuges along the way. Many of our clients expect hotel-like accommodations along these iconic routes, but it's important to understand that mountain refuges are very different. While the term "refuge" might evoke images of cosy, luxurious cabins, it's important to set the right expectations. Refuges are not hotels – far from it – but that's part of the charm! Refuges provide the basics – food, shelter, and community – while immersing you in the mountain experience. They're not about luxury but rather about embracing the simplicity and beauty of the outdoors. In this journal, we'll break down the key differences between refuges, hotels, and auberges, so you know exactly what to expect and can fully enjoy your time in the mountains.

WHAT IS A REFUGE?

A refuge is a mountain hut designed to give you the essentials: a bed, a meal, and shelter. Positioned in remote, often stunning locations, refuges provide trekkers and climbers with a place to rest in areas where regular hotels simply don't exist. The focus is on practicality and creating a community of adventurers, all sharing stories of the day's achievements over a simple meal.

But let's be clear: a refuge is not a hotel. It's a bit rough around the edges, but that's what makes the experience special. You'll be rubbing shoulders with fellow adventurers, possibly sharing a bunk room, and bonding over the joys and challenges of life in the mountains.

THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REFUGES AND HOTELS

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO AVOID ANY SURPRISES:

FACILITIES

Refuges are all about keeping things simple. You'll likely sleep in a shared dormitory with bunk beds, and while many refuges do offer hot showers, some are limited in water supply, especially at higher altitudes. It's a back-to-basics kind of comfort – think of it as a camping experience, but indoors!

Hotels, by contrast, are all about privacy and convenience. You can expect private rooms, en suite bathrooms, daily housekeeping, and perhaps even a bit of pampering – everything you won't find at a refuge.

COMMUNAL ATMOSPHERE

In a refuge, meals are served at set times, and everyone eats together. The food is simple but hearty, designed to refuel tired bodies – expect lots of pasta, soups, and local specialities. While it's not a gourmet feast, the warmth of a communal meal after a day in the mountains is hard to beat.

Hotels offer more flexibility with meal times and menus. You can expect a wider range of dishes and the option to dine privately if you prefer.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

At a refuge, don't be surprised to find yourself in a dormitory-style room, sharing with other trekkers or climbers. It's all part of the experience! That said, some refuges have a limited number of private rooms, ask us if you would prefer that and we will do our best to secure one for you. Bedding is provided, but bring a sleeping bag liner for added comfort. It's cosy, a little cramped at times, but there's nothing quite like waking up in a refuge, surrounded by some of the world's most breathtaking landscapes.

In hotels, you'll have a private room, complete with full bedding and possibly a fluffy towel waiting for you after a hot shower – luxuries that you might miss in a refuge.

ELECTRICITY AND CONNECTIVITY

Refuges are located in remote areas, so electricity is sometimes limited, and Wi-Fi is a rare luxury. If you're lucky, there may be a communal charging station, but it's a great excuse to disconnect and enjoy the mountain scenery. Besides, who needs emails when you have the Alps or the Dolomites right outside your window?

Hotels, of course, are better equipped. You'll have more access to electricity, charging points, and reliable Wi-Fi to stay connected if you wish.

EMBRACING THE REFUGE EXPERIENCE

Sure, refuges aren't about luxury – but that's what makes them so memorable. There's something special about arriving at a refuge after a long day of trekking or climbing, sharing a meal with fellow adventurers, and knowing that you're experiencing the mountains in a way few do.

It's all part of the adventure, and while refuges might not offer the plush comforts of a hotel, they give you the chance to connect with nature and your fellow trekkers in a way that's truly unique. So, pack your sense of adventure (and a sleeping bag liner), and get ready to enjoy the authentic mountain experience.

If you're unsure of what to pack, make sure to check our kit lists for specific trekking and climbing adventures, and remember: if you're after luxury, save it for after your trek!

If you are craving a bit of luxury to unwind after your trek, feel free to get in touch with us, and we'll be happy to help you book a comfortable hotel for some well-deserved relaxation after your adventure.

Interested in what staying in a refuge is really like? Take a look at **Mountain Refuges: Simple Shelters, Big Adventures** or **learn how to manage dietary requirements** during your stay with **Dietary Requirements in Refuges**.