



Refugios and Huts
Here is an introduction to the basics of the Dolomites rifugio (refuges/huts)



“Forget Rocky Mountain huts, Dolomites refuges are more like high-end hotels.”

An overnight stay in a high altitude mountain refuge (rifugio in Italian) is simply a ‘must’, a memorable part of any adventure holiday in the Dolomites. The conveniently situated mountain huts with hiker-only access are strategically placed to act as a base for hikers. All through the summer season they provide basic overnight accommodation and warm meals. They are marvelous establishments and enable users to stay at high altitudes in relative comfort for days on end, without having the weight or bother of carrying a tent, sleeping bag and pad, or cooking gear and food. You will be amazed at how much better a refreshing beer tastes when enjoyed on the typical hut terrace with a panorama of the surrounding mountains instead of down in town.

These huts are run by CAI, the Italian Alpine Club, or by private families. Supplies are brought up by aerial cableway or helicopter. Some offer the option of 4-, 6- or 8-bed rooms. Most, however, have a large attic dormitory with rows of cuccette or bunk beds. Blankets and pillows are always in abundant supply so sleeping bags are not needed, but you should take your own sheet sleeping sack or bag liner (see the photo). This is available from all REI shops or directly at the refuges (the average cost is around 20 Euro)



<http://www.rei.com/product/627255/cocoon-cotton-bag-linertravel-sheet>

As far as facilities go, you will almost always find an inside toilet and shared washroom. Bring your own towel. There is almost always running water now days, albeit a bit on the chilly side. The occasional refuge will offer a doccia calda (hot shower) at a modest price. Remember that this region has few ice fields and rare high altitude water courses, so water may be in short supply at the height of the summer season. Expect to be asked to go sparingly: "non spreca acqua" (don't waste water).

On the other hand, a sign may say "acqua non potabile" (water not fit for drinking). This is only rarely due to the presence of harmful bacteria in high-altitude locations, and is more often due to a mineral composition unsuitable for human consumption (local health authorities carry out regular analyses). Safe bottled mineral water is always on sale. (1/2 L. or 1L. or 1,5L.)

All three meals are available at the refuges. For lunch and dinner, the first course is a substantial Italian-style home-made minestrone (vegetable soup) or a pasta dish, while the German-speaking huts usually offer Knodel (Canederli in Italian) which are light dumplings flavored with liver, spinach or smoked pork (speck), and served in a broth or with Parmesan cheese. This is followed by meat, cheese or eggs for second course, then a contorno (vegetable side dish). Wine, beer and a selection of fiery spirits such as grappa are always on sale. Breakfast is mostly continental style - caffè latte (milk coffee), té (tea) or even cioccolata calda (hot chocolate) by special request, served with bread rolls, butter and jam.

A note on behavior in refuges: hiking boots are not worn inside, but should be removed and left on the appropriate shelves, usually just inside the front door. All refuges provide rough slippers for you to use.

The open season for the huts varies depending on location, weather conditions and accessibility. The majority of Alpine Club refuges also have a separate ricovero invernale or 'winter shelter' adjoining the main building, intended for emergency use when the refuge itself is closed.



Checkout these websites for some of the most popular refuges in the central Dolomites. This is just a hint of how great it will be to stay in huts during your trek!

<http://www.rodadivael.it/eng/index.html> <http://www.rifugiopassoprincipe.com>

<http://www.rifugiofronza.com> <http://www.rifugiorealberto.com/en/index.htm>

<http://www.schlernhaus.it/htmluk/index.html> <http://www.tierseralpl.com/index.php?lang=en>

<http://www.rifugioantermoia.com> <http://www.rifugiocarlovalentini.com/english/index.htm>

Enjoy your Dolomites tour!