

The CAI (Italian Alpine Club) mountain lodges: problems, technologies and prospective

by Andrea Remotti

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Garelli 1970 m.

The cheerful bubbling of a stream, the devastating power of an avalanche, the silence that unfolds amid still virgin valleys, the storm that destroys and yet renews at the same time, are just a few of the thousands of images that the mountains – in the glory – offer us each day. In them we can see the mystery, the never-ending challenge to man's abilities and sometimes even a peace-full place.

Since ancient times man has built dwelling for the most diverse reasons and the mountain lodge has been considered both a military outpost and a resting place for pilgrims who had to wander mountain paths in order to reach the forthest flung corners of the earth.

However, this paper will try to demonstrate that the mountain lodge is merely the best attempt to establish the old friendship pact between man and nature, a meeting ground between the needs of one and those of the other.

Alpine lodges are a complex and varied topic which has endless facets. They run from the study of types of architecture to the technological problems posed by high altitudes, from building code requirements to supply problem, from waste disposal to researching alternative energy sources.

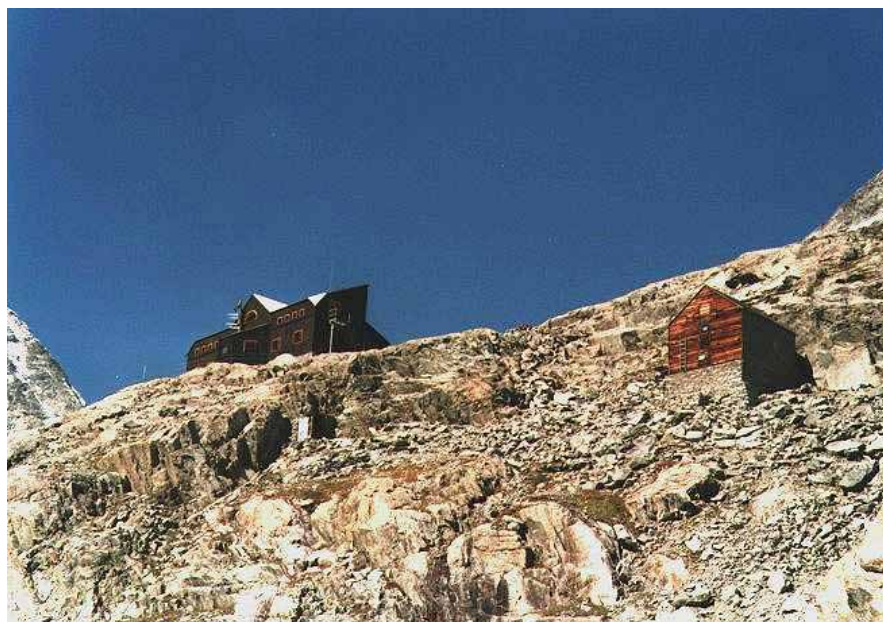
This paper has attempted to deal with the topic of mountain lodges in an organic manner by using an interdisciplinary method as much as possible and by putting forward simple and concrete answers to the various problems that are met on by one. However, the aim is not so much to write a treatise that deals with the topic thoroughly as to put forward points upon which to reflect which regard the main problems that involve mountain lodge architecture.

Therefore, there will be no in-depth description of the various types of plants nor of how they work; the maximum and minimum dimensions of the various spaces within a mountain lodge will not be specified; all of the standards, and consequently the analysis of each job to be done, will not be reported. Instead, you will find a series of indications regarding new technologies, the sizing of spaces within the lodge, how the lodges are distributed, technological details to take into account, problems due to altitude, the main standards to respect and errors avoid; all of this will be observed in an organic fashion, always taking into account the influence of many factors in each aesthetic and project choice.

In particular there has been an attempt to report some avant-garde technological solutions – with an eye to the future, but with ample reference to the past – highlighting the history, culture, technical and architectural choices that have produced the present C.A.I. mountain lodge "fleet".

The total number of mountain lodges owned by the Italian Alpine Club – in the Piedmont and Aosta Valley – is 144 with bed-space for over 6500. In Chapter III a large number of structures are analysed and a reliable sample is provided that represents the typical characteristics of a C.A.I. mountain lodge.

That is why only the newest lodges, or those which have recently been renovated, have been taken into consideration. However, all of the main and varied types of construction have been included. These range from old stone mountain homes that have been turned into lodges to hotel lodges from the 30's to lodges from the 50's and 60's which have get to be renovated to the most recent buildings.



Nacamuli 2818 m

"Even when the mountain is deserted, the little house will remain to await man's possession; it will be veiled by clouds; it will be covered by ice during the long winter; it will creak in the midst of the hardhitting storm like a small ship on the rough sea: but, once again smile happily and offer hospitality in a new atmosphere."

Guido Rey



Vallanta 2450 m

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