

PRESS KIT



WEBSITE www.huts.org

ADDRESS 1280 Ute Avenue | Suite 21 | Aspen, Colorado 81611

TELEPHONE 970/925-4554

Ben Dodge | Executive Director | ben@huts.org

Press Inquiries | Cindy Carpenter | cindy@huts.org

A HISTORY **10th Mountain Division Hut Association**



Harry Gates Hut
© BRIAN DAVIS

10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION HUT ASSOCIATION is a product of one man's dream. In this case the man is **Fritz Benedict**, an architect who has been closely involved in the design of Aspen, Vail and other ski area communities.

Benedict's dream was influenced by a system of huts in New Hampshire that dates back over 100 years, as well as the famous skiing *Haute Route* between Chamonix, France and Zermatt, Switzerland. In Benedict's mind, a similar system connecting **Aspen and Vail, Colorado** seemed a logical way to provide access to Colorado's beautiful and challenging backcountry during the winter months.

It was also his dream to honor the infantrymen of the **U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division**, who learned their skiing and mountaineering skills at **Camp Hale**, north of Leadville near Tennessee Pass. **Camp Hale–Continental Divide National Monument** is the newest national monument and it sits in the heart of Colorado's ski country. Much of the territory that now comprises the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association was originally part of the training ground for 10th Mountain Division troops, who fought critical battles in the Italian Dolomites near the end of World War II. Many of the soldiers became key figures in the ski industry.

In 1980 Benedict began putting his dream together. At that time, he formed what later was to become the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association. The group consisted of architects, planners, and backcountry guides, all keen to see Benedict's dream realized. Former Secretary of Defense and part-time Aspen resident **Robert McNamara**, helped convince a skeptical U.S. Forest Service of the project's potential success. McNamara went so far as to agree to tear down the huts after five years if their use did not reach anticipated levels! To date, all huts are still standing!

Through the efforts of **Dr. Ben Eiseman**, a friend of the McNamara family, funds were raised and the first two huts—Margy's (named for the McNamara's late wife Margaret) and McNamara—were designed and constructed in 1982. The project was ambitious, yet a special camaraderie developed as volunteers contributed time, effort and materials.

An ecologically sensitive approach was utilized from the outset; abundant beetle-kill pine was used to build the first hut. All huts face south and many have incorporated solar panels to provide electricity for lighting. At some huts water is collected from snowmelt off the roof and stored in cisterns. Two huts—Fowler/Hilliard and the

Jackal—have won architectural awards. Each new hut incorporates lessons learned from the previous models.

The huts provide a cozy and efficient shelter warmed by wood stoves that are a fitting end to a long day's ski. The trails that connect the huts are designed for intermediate level skiers and are located to avoid significant avalanche danger. Most are moderately steep ascents. A few offer challenging climbs and exciting descents. All have breathtaking views of the mountain wilderness.

At the time of inception a master plan was initiated. In addition to the fourteen 10th



Mountain huts that have been built over the last decade, 10th Mountain handles reservations for 26 other huts in the region that are either privately owned or part of other hut systems, and are connected by an extensive network of over 300 miles of trails.

A board of directors, including many 10th Mountain Division veterans, has been established and an ongoing fundraising effort is of primary importance to continue Fritz Benedict's dream. Each hut donor is asked to contribute toward an endowment fund. This fund is used to maintain the huts and to keep the nightly use fee affordable. By all measures, including the 71,756 winter user nights recorded at year-round huts during the 2022-2023 season the system is a success.

As Benedict wrote: "We began with a small start and a large vision based on the many huts throughout the European Alps. Now the trail extends in both directions from Aspen to include Vail and Leadville in an almost continuous loop. In a few years it will be possible to ski from Crested Butte to Ashcroft to Aspen using the Alfred A. Braun Hut System, then on to Vail and Copper

Fritz Benedict (1914-1995)

© DAVID HISER
WWW.PHOTOASPEN.COM

Mountain skiing the 10th Mountain Division Hut System. Perhaps one day others will follow our lead with huts in Frisco, Breckenridge, Keystone and Leadville."

Fritz Benedict, remarking upon the anticipated completion of the 10th Mountain Hut System—"...we will then have achieved our own American *Haute Route*." Benedict's dream has now come true.

FACT SHEET

MISSION STATEMENT The purpose of 10th Mountain is to plan, finance, build and manage, for public use, a mountain hut system that promotes understanding and appreciation of the natural mountain environment while developing individual self-reliance.

TITLE **Tenth Mountain Division Hut Association**

Abbreviated version: **10th Mountain**

MANAGED BY **10th Mountain Division Hut Association**

Ben Dodge | Executive Director | ben@huts.org

LOCATION 1280 Ute Avenue, Suite 21 | Aspen Colorado 81611 | 970/925-4554

WEBSITE www.huts.org

FOUNDED 1980 as a not-for-profit organization under a Colorado 501 C 3 status.

PURPOSE Originally to build and manage huts connected by trails between Aspen and Vail for use by backcountry skiers modeled after the *Haute Route* system between Chamonix, France and Zermatt, Switzerland. The goal of providing a safe winter wilderness experience at affordable prices has grown to encompass an educational approach to the backcountry to heighten sensitivity and respect for the environment.

HUTS 14 huts (McNamara Hut, Margy's Hut, Harry Gates Hut, Peter Estin Hut, 10th Mountain Division Hut, Fritz & Fabi Benedict Huts, Eiseman Hut, Betty Bear Hut, Fowler-Hilliard Hut, Jackal Hut, Sangree M. Froelicher Hut, Skinner Hut, Uncle Bud's Hut) are located in the mountains bounded by Aspen to the southwest, Leadville to the southeast, Vail Pass to the east and Vail to the north.

In addition, 10th Mountain takes reservations for 26 privately owned huts: Polar Star Inn, Seipel Hut, Vance's Cabin, Continental Divide Cabin, Point Breeze Cabin, Emmelyn Hut, and High Lonesome Hut. There are 3 Shrine Mountain Inn huts: Jay's Cabin, Chuck's Cabin (up & down) & Walter's Cabin (up & down). Summit Huts Association has 4 huts: Janet's Cabin, Francie's Cabin, Sisters Cabin, and Section House. 10th Mountain also handles reservations for Alfred A. Braun System (7 huts), and Friends' Hut, which are located between Aspen and Crested Butte.

There are 40 huts served by the 10th Mountain reservations system.

TRAILS Over 300 miles connecting 40 huts.

HUT PROFILE The huts are located between 9,700 feet and 11,700 feet in the central Colorado Rockies. Each hut includes a living dining area heated by wood burning stoves; all wood is pre-cut and ready for use. Kitchens are equipped with propane burners and a wood burning cook stove plus basic utensils for cooking and eating. There is sleeping space for 20 people divided among several rooms on a “continuous bunk” system rather than individual bunk beds. Electricity in the huts is provided by solar panels. All huts are south facing with ample deck space. Outhouses are adjacent to each hut. The huts that were built later have a water storage tank and water pumps.

USER NIGHTS When the concept of the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association was proposed to the U.S. Forest Service, the agency was very skeptical of the potential use on Forest Service lands. In fact, the USFS was guaranteed by 10th Mountain that the huts would be torn down after five years if their use was not up to perceived expectations. That promise quickly became unnecessary.

Today, those that were involved in the concept, planning and construction of those first huts are seeing their dreams come true. Winter hut usage continues to rise with each passing season and the system has grown from 2 huts in 1984 (2,252 user nights) to 40 huts in 2023 (71,756 user nights).

FUNDING Construction of the huts has been funded by donations from individuals and foundations. Endowments associated to each hut are vital to maintain and operate the system. Membership in the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association also accounts for a portion of operating funds.

WHAT'S IN THE NAME? 10th Mountain Division Hut Association was named after the 10th Mountain Division of the U.S. Army, a corps of 15,000 men who underwent specific training in skiing, mountaineering, and alpine survival techniques during World War II at **Camp Hale**, (north of Leadville near Tennessee Pass). **Camp Hale–Continental Divide National Monument** is the newest national monument and it sits in the heart of Colorado's ski country. The 10th Mountain Division drew not only accomplished skiers and climbers, but also thousands of others who faced the Army's rigorous mountain training before seeing action in the Italian Dolomites in 1945.

10TH MOUNTAIN HUTS IN THE NEWS **Aspen Sojourner Magazine** | Tess Weaver | December 6, 2022
Published in the Winter/Spring 2022-23 issue of Aspen Sojourner
<https://www.aspensojo.com/news-and-profiles/2022/12/hopeful-huts>

Aspen Daily News | Ken Pletcher | May 22, 2021
https://www.aspendailynews.com/news/new-film-honors-10th-mountain-huts/article_55528c76-baa3-11eb-be79-07b177ed1ba8.html

The Aspen Times | Ted Mahon | October 7, 2022
Hut Run Hut: Trail Running Adventures Through the 10th Mountain Huts
<https://www.aspentimes.com/news/hut-run-hut/>

The Catalyst | Snow and Solitude at the 10th Mountain Hut | December 4, 2015
<https://thecatalystnews.com/2015/12/04/snow-and-solitude-at-the-10th-mountain-hut/>

Outside Online Magazine
<https://www.outsideonline.com/Adventure-Travel/Destinations/10th-Mountain-Division-Huts-Colorado/>

The Aspen Times | Tenth Mountain Hut System Preps for 31st Season
Scott Condon | Nov 24, 2012
<https://www.postindependent.com/news/tenth-mountain-hut-system-preps-for-31st-season/>

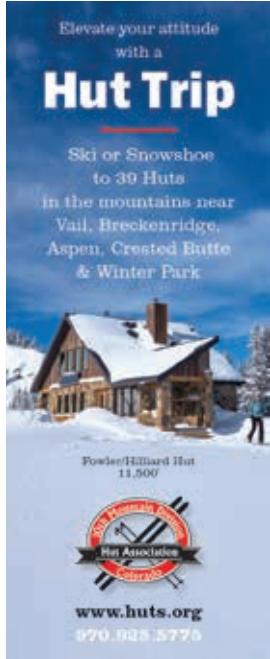
WEB EXCLUSIVE: **Two Additional Quiet Trails**
5280 Magazine | November 2013

Backcountry Ski the 10th Mountain Division Huts, Colorado
National Geographic Online | Kate Siber | 2013

Out of Bounds Colorado Escape: The backcountry HutTrip
5280 Magazine | December 2013

www.rootsrated.com | Jordan Curet | [rootsrated.com/stories/the-10th-mountain-division-huts-in-summer-tips-for-a-great-trip](https://www.rootsrated.com/stories/the-10th-mountain-division-huts-in-summer-tips-for-a-great-trip)

GALLERY Photos | 10th Mountain Division Hut Association



© JACK BRAUER



© Fredrik Marmsater



© FREDRIK MARMSATER



© CHARLES LUCARELLI



© SCOTT MESSINA



© CRAIG HOFFMAN

PHOTOGRAPHERS Chris Council & Emily Chaplin

www.c2-photography.com

David Hiser

www.photoaspen.com

Craig Hoffman

www.craighoffmanphotography.com

Fredrik Marmsater

www.fredrikmarmsater.com



© CHRIS COUNCIL & EMILY CHAPLIN



© CRAIG HOFFMAN



© FREDRIK MARMSATER

MAPS

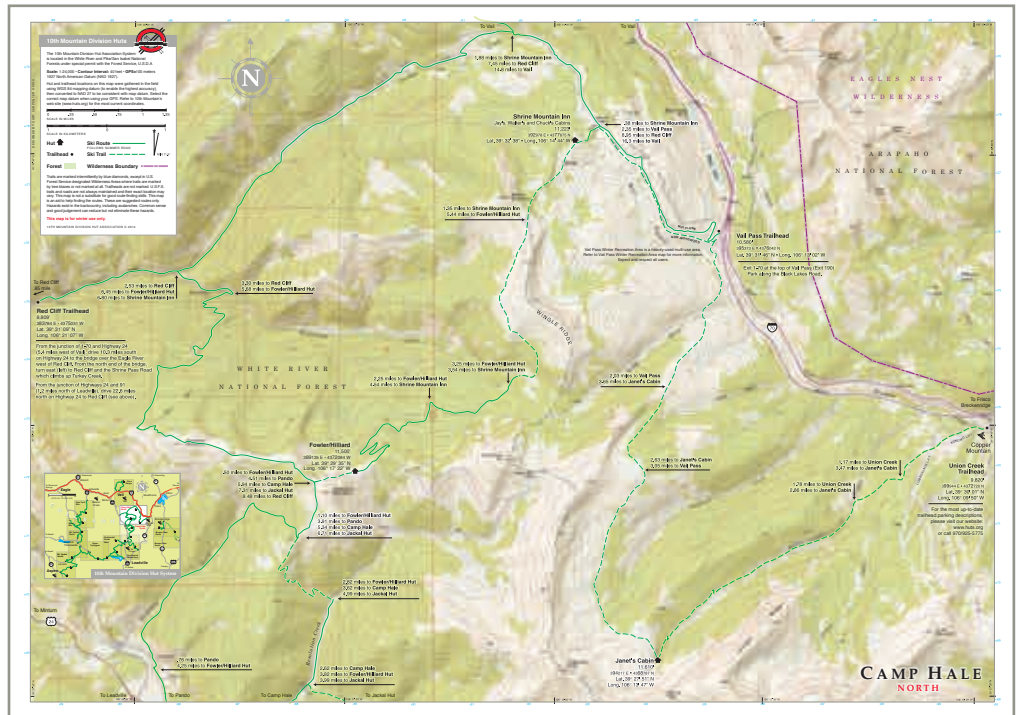


10th Mountain Hut System is in central Colorado between Crested Butte, Aspen, Vail, Breckenridge, and Winter Park.



© CURT CARPENTER

10th Mountain publishes detailed trail maps for the entire hut system.



© CURT CARPENTER