

VELUX®

EXPERIENCE THE NATURE

Holiday Cabins in Montafon, Austria







OFFERING EXPERIENCES

Two ski-crazy childhood friends, Tim and Chris were pondering on how to turn the wish of spending their time skiing into a sustainable business model. Chris has moved from Germany's flatlands to the Austrian Alps, to Montafon. Next to a guesthouse, where he was working, was a piece of land, outside of village's construction zone, but available for 25 years lease and construction of temporary buildings. For two years the two friends were looking for a suitable tiny house producer. The moment the possibility of land lease and a right cabin model came together, cabinski was born. The producer of the cabin – a young company called Cabin One – has just launched their product. Tim and Chris were their first big client.

In close collaboration with the local building authorities, a scheme for the entire plot was created. Tim and Chris imagined eight to ten units standing each separately, but a masterplan for the area required larger volumes, which could be solved by placing the units wall-to-wall. The requirement of roof ridges should follow the direction of the valley could be met thanks to Cabin One units' gable roofs. This turned out to be a perfect orientation for the cab, both in terms of sunlight and views.

The only necessary modification to the original project was to place the VELUX window on the other side of the gable, so the inhabitants of mirrored adjacent units do not look into each other beds. This change led to introducing a larger window, which frames the view onto the steep slopes of a nearby mountain and the passing clouds.

"We compared products of many producers and found Cabin One to be the best for us. We at cabinski support local products and small producers, and so do Andreas and Simon, the founders of the brand. We also share the interest in the future of tourism as well as belief, that there are other models than traditional hotels."

Chris, owner at cabinski Montafon

Whereas traditional hotels rely on personal advice, Chris and Tim accompany their guests digitally on various platforms, on which they share advice on what to do and where to eat in the area. Even in difficult times, the cabins are often booked. The majority of the guests are sports and outdoor enthusiasts, mostly couples from various cities in the area.

The cabins are very new, and so are the fragile plants between them. With time, they will grow and ensure the privacy of each cabin's garden. The choice of species mirrors the local vegetation. After 25 years lease time – expected latest point, when the cabins will be dismantled – the plants will stay, seamlessly melting with the edge of the forest nearby. The cabinski team is already planning next villages in new, exciting locations.



"Cabin One met all our expectations in terms of size, design, ecology, as well as innovation spirit. Their cabin was what we needed for our new project."

Chris, owner at cabinski Montafon





CABIN ONE



MATCHING PIECES

Cabin One's dark wooden facades were welcomed by Montafon's building authorities, as they remind of traditional, vernacular buildings in the area.

The wooden construction – a variation on balloon frame – stabilized with plywood-clad interior forms a unit which can be placed both on a cast foundation as well as on two steel profiles.


Cabinski ordered one of the most exclusive options of the unit, with floor heating and integrated VELUX window automation. The alpine location and cabinski's business ideas required some adjustments to the initial scheme: the wardrobe under the bed was replaced with a niche with an additional mattress, the cupboard at the entrance replaced by open shelves. The solid wooden floor was oiled, to facilitate future renovations.

The minimalistic interior is a perfect backdrop for Tim's decoration talent: with carefully assorted cushions, felt covers of the benches, assorted plates and eco-friendly bedding the cabins radiate peace and freshness.

"We are delighted with the cabins, and so are our guests. We have opened in the beginning of August and had around 600 people here since then. They are very respectful with the interiors and keep a perfect order in their units. A lot of photos are being taken here, I must admit, we made a perfectly instagrammable setting!"

Chris, owner at cabinski Montafon



A photograph of a cabin interior. The walls and ceiling are made of light-colored wood. A large, irregularly shaped skylight is set into the ceiling, providing natural light. Below the skylight, a bed is visible with white, crumpled linens. A black metal railing runs across the middle of the frame. In the background, a wooden wall features a row of small, dark, rectangular openings, possibly for ventilation or storage. A small black lamp is mounted on the wall near the bed.

"Studies on hospitalised patients prove, that being connected to beautiful surroundings speeds up the healing process. The same applies to healthy, but tired people. In cabinski Montafon one sees the beauty of nature even through the roof window."

Andreas Rauch, Cabin One

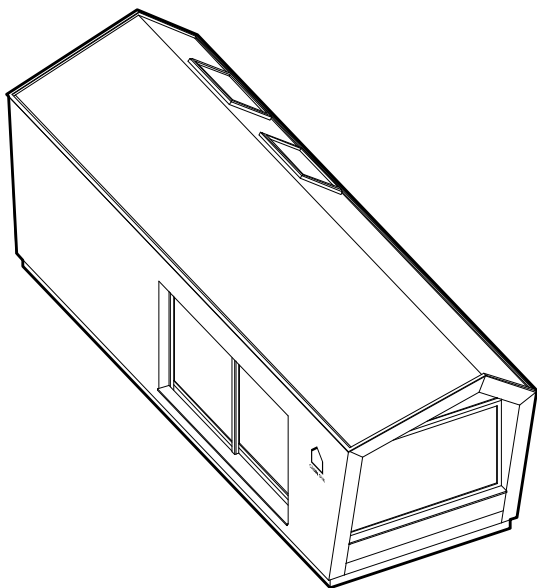


FROM CITY ROOFS TO THE FIELDS

The story of Cabin One began six years after Andreas Rauch has finished his studies in architecture and was, after some years of practice in various offices, looking for new challenges on his professional path. Already during his studies, he got interested in the topic of urban densification; through common friends, he met Simon Becker, also a young architect and a talented entrepreneur, who despite his young age had a considerable experience in launching ideas and products. They embarked on a journey to the unknown, intending to promote the use of buildings' roofs as space for creating an additional living area. They wanted their idea to be scalable, and came up with the idea of a standard unit, much like a shipping container – with added design value. First drawings were done, the contours of the cabin fixed.

"Our densification strategy was like playing "Tetris" on city roofs. We were also comparing it to a car-sharing business model, only with houses. Imagine an ecosystem of the cabins throughout the whole of Europe, allowing you to maintain the same – minimalistic – living standard independently from geographical location. We understand our cabin as an industrial product and ourselves as designers working on a perfecting the process for mass production. "

Andreas Rauch, Cabin One



Their innovation spirit quickly drew the attention of the big players; a real estate company calculated, that around 30% of the roofs of their properties would be suitable for cabins. Scaled up on entire Germany it would have been about 1.2 millions new apartments, which could have been built on existing roofs. Fire regulations and other technical limitations turned out to be great obstacles to the enterprise: the duo moved with the same product to a new field.

A construction company decided to invest in the innovation by constructing a prototype unit and placing it on their grounds on a prime location in the centre of Berlin. Thousands of passers-by have seen it, first commissions have followed; the cabin was mostly used as garden pavilions or home offices. But Andreas Rauch also recalls clients, who have sold their single-family house and all belongings to live in a tiny house by Cabin One, and until today consider it the best move in their lives.

Although the launch went well, Cabin One founders were still looking for possibilities beyond sales to individual clients. The media were on their side, in the years 2016 and 2017 a plethora of interviews and articles appeared in the architecture trade press. Various variations to the prototype were studied, including stackable units – and quickly discarded as uninteresting in terms of design. The appearance of Chris and Tim, who were looking for a product matching their business model was a breakthrough for both parties.







"We did not want a flat roof in our cabin. The experience of being in a space under a gable roof is so much more interesting."

Andreas Rauch, Cabin One



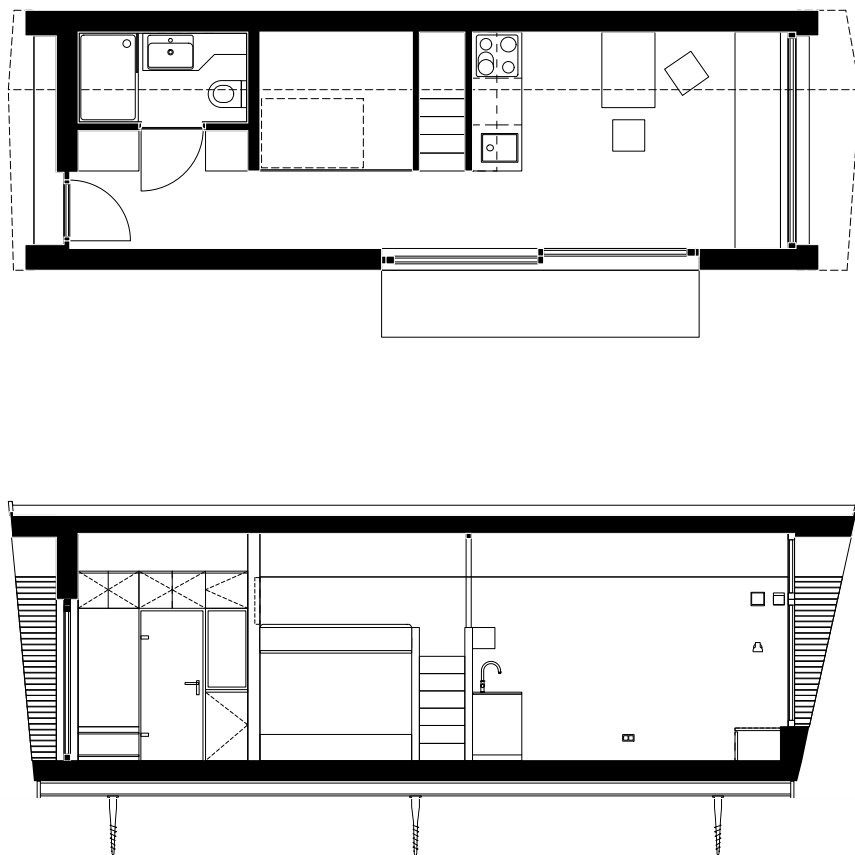
FORM ALSO FOLLOWS FUNCTION

Andreas Rauch refers to the design of the cabin as a mix of architectural, logistic and sales factors. He recalls choosing slant cabin's end walls to ensure the visibility – at that time meant for the roofs – from the streets below them. While this aspect lost its relevance, slanted walls stayed for their look and some rain protection over the entrance.

Also, the gable roof is slanted, which is crucial for the use of the space inside the cabin, as it enabled placing the bed on the side. Excentric roof ridge is a result of transportation requirements: the designers wanted the cabin to fit in one piece on a truck, which meant keeping compulsory height, width and length. Neither the cabin could not be higher, nor did they want the bed to be in the middle of the space.

We often refer to automotive industry during the process of designing: it also underlies many functional restrictions, yet the final result has to stand out thanks to its unique, extraordinary look and character – on top of fulfilling all other requirements.”

Andreas Rauch, Cabin One



Floorplan and longitudinal section.





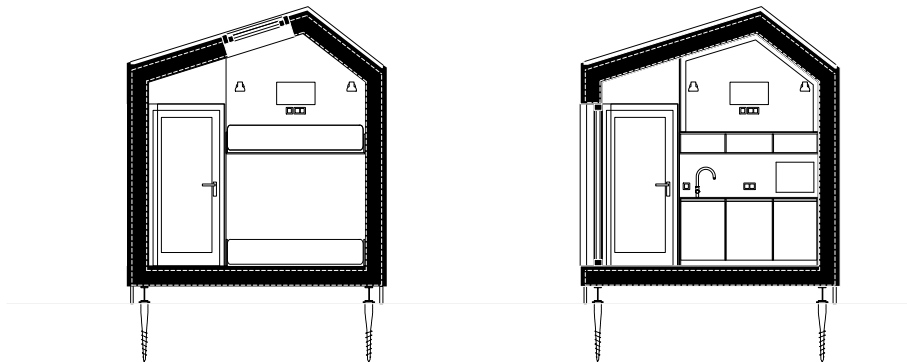
ON SMALL SPACES

"Tiny spaces need more daylight than other ones and a strong relation to the surroundings. Actually, they are considered to be a healthier habitat for humans than large rooms with small windows and no connection to the outside."

Andreas Rauch quotes what he has learned from Harald Deinsberger-Deinsweger, an environmental psychologist, whose lectures he attended during architecture studies.

The architects chose unusually large openings both on the side and the end façade, as well as roof openings, which at first seems contradictory with the plan of creating an efficient, minimalistic space.

For Andreas Rauch and Simon Becker roof windows are an indispensable element of the project, a necessary completion of the façade openings.



Cross sections, through the sleeping and the living area.

"The production company suggested skipping roof windows. To proof their necessity, we made renderings of the cabin's bathroom with and without light from above: the difference convinced the company immediately to stick to our original design. Technical advantages like facilitated ventilation and CO2 levels control were obvious to everyone. On our sides, we were also happy to keep the view on the stars directly from bed."

Andreas Rauch, Cabin One






CABIN ONE



"A well designed tiny space needs both façade and roof openings. While the balcony doors connect you to the landscape, roof windows brighten up the ceiling and make space appear larger."

Andreas Rauch, Cabin One














"My favourite space in the cabin is the bench at the large window in one of the cabins in the first row, with a wide view of the valley and the mountains. In the summer, it's close to the fireplace outside."

Chris, owner at cabinski Montafon

PROJECT DATA

Project: Holiday huts cabinski.at
Location: Montafon, Austria
Architects: Andreas Rauch and Simon Becker, Cabin One
Year: 2020

Photos: Kasia Jackowska





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