

Gothic Area Backcountry Skiing Options

Brittany Walker Konsella

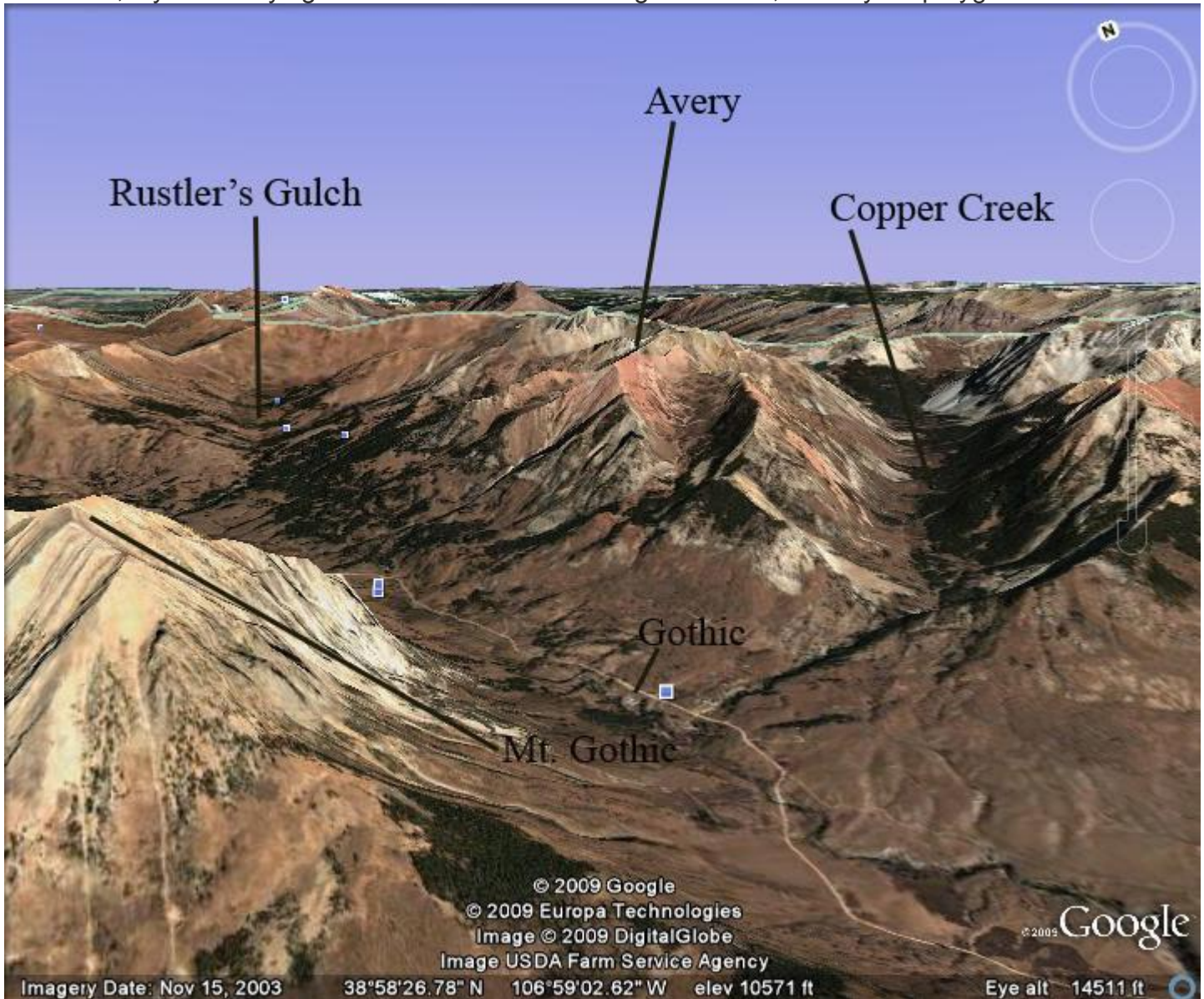
November 5, 2009

Backcountry Skiing, Crested Butte

After my last post about [cross-country skiing in the Gothic area](#), I received a comment on my blog. This commenter said he and a group of people were planning on staying in Gothic in February and had rented both the Forest Queen and Maroon cabins (for info on how to reserve these huts, please visit the [Crested Butte Nordic Center Website](#)). The commenter asked if I had any recommendations of backcountry skiing options in the area and the wheels started turning in my brain. Rather than post a lengthy comment, I chose to write a response as a blog entry as I'm sure many other visitors to this area have similar questions.

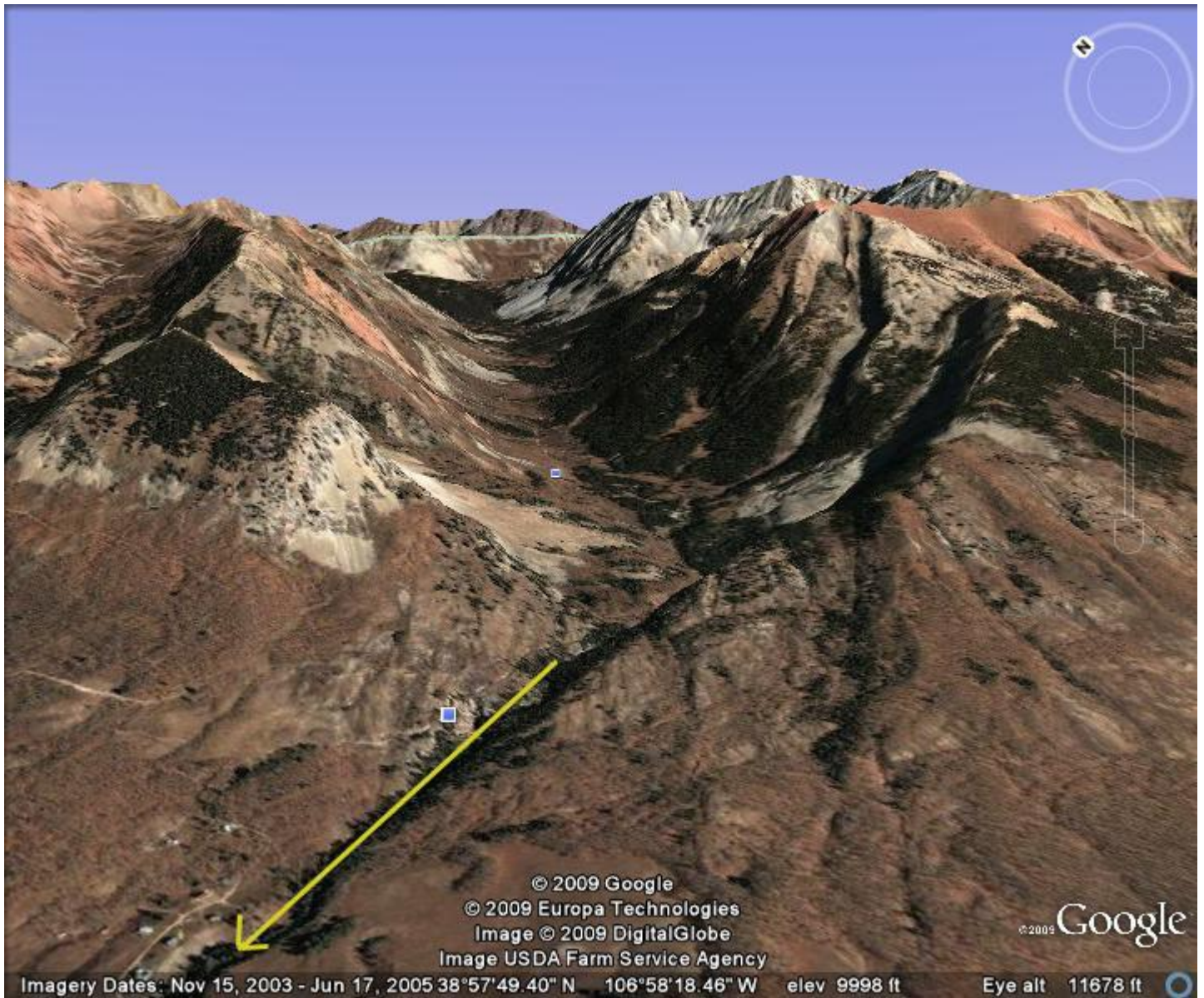
I'll begin with a bit of a disclaimer- I've skied many of the lines I mention below, but not all of them. Some of them I've wanted to ski. Some of them I've just noticed would be good lines to ski. And, some I've known others to ski. If I have more information about a specific line posted elsewhere on this blog, I've provided the links here. I'm sure there are plenty of backcountry lines to ski in this area. These are just some of the ones that Frank and I recommend. As always, consider the avalanche danger when choosing your line. Some lines recommended here may not be appropriate unless avy danger is low, which is more likely to happen in spring than winter.

First of all, if you're staying in the town of Gothic during the winter, this is your playground.



Copper Creek Area

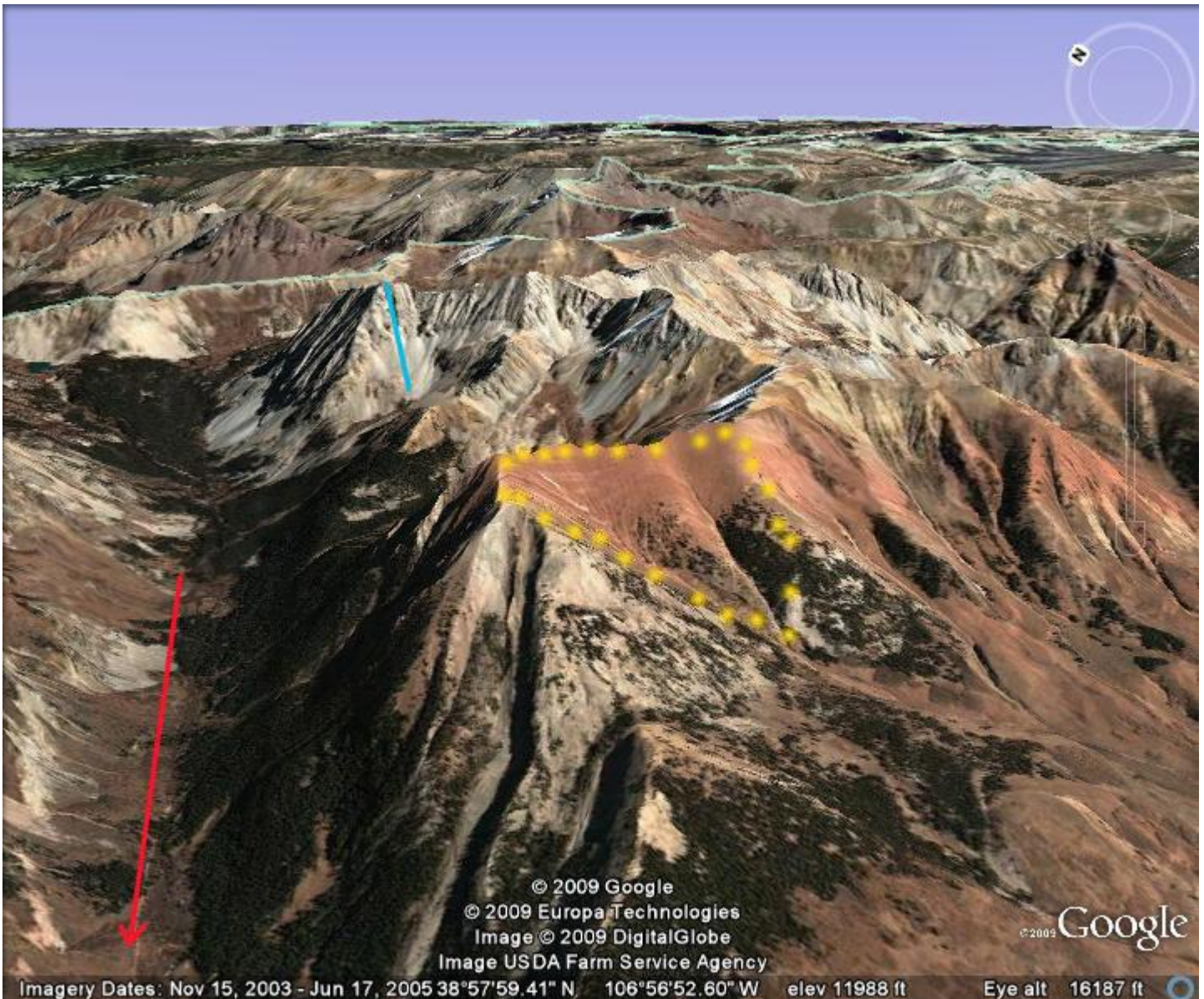
The Copper Creek drainage sprouts upward right from the town of Gothic. The proximity of this drainage to Gothic make it an easy and obvious choice to explore.



The Google Earth image above shows the Copper Creek drainage. The yellow arrow points back to Gothic. As you can see, the slopes on either side of the drainage provide some short-vert skiing—some fairly mellow, some fairly steep. The gladed terrain in this area can provide nice ski terrain, especially on days when avalanche danger is not optimal to go for bigger lines.



This image shows the area just east of the Copper Creek drainage. The drainage itself is marked in red. The yellow dots mark something I like to term the "White Bowl". This bowl can be seen from miles down the valley and is a prominent feature in the CB area. This bowl can make a good ski when avalanche danger is low. This bowl did completely rip out a couple of years ago in a skier triggered avalanche, so be careful. The area to the west of White Rock and White Mountain is called Queen Basin. This Queen Basin is another great place to explore. The lower part of the basin may be a good option to ski during higher avy danger. The higher lines are great to ski during low avy danger. The green line off of White Rock marks another ski option better left for low avy danger days.



This image provides a slightly different view looking up the Copper Creek drainage. The yellow dots again mark "White Bowl". The red arrow points back to Gothic. The blue line marks the nice White Widow couloir which comes off a sub-peak of White Rock.



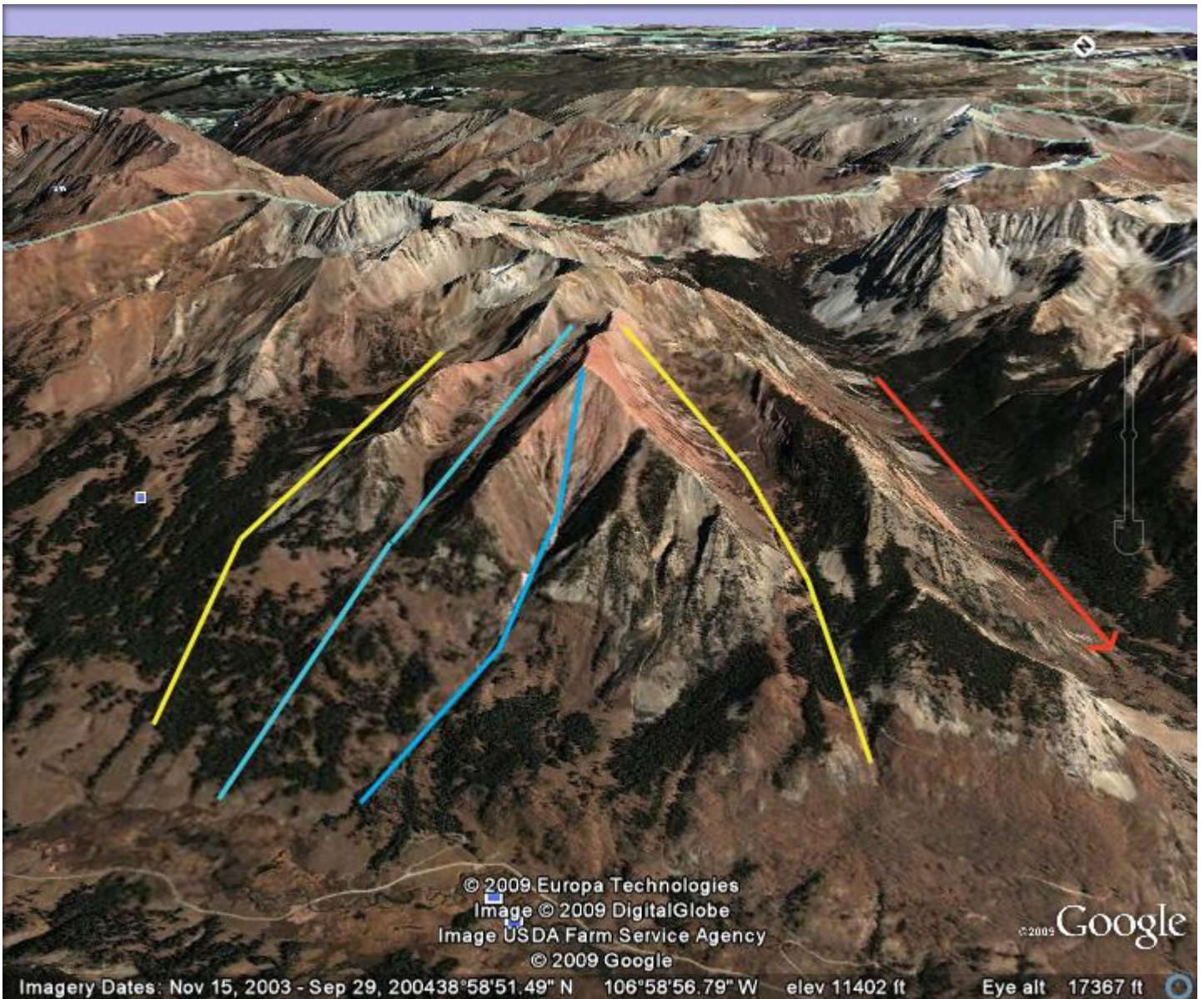
Queen Basin is featured in this Google Earth image. Red points back to Gothic. The blue line marks the El Nacho couloir coming off of White Mountain. Yellow marks another viable ski option.

Links to trip Reports:

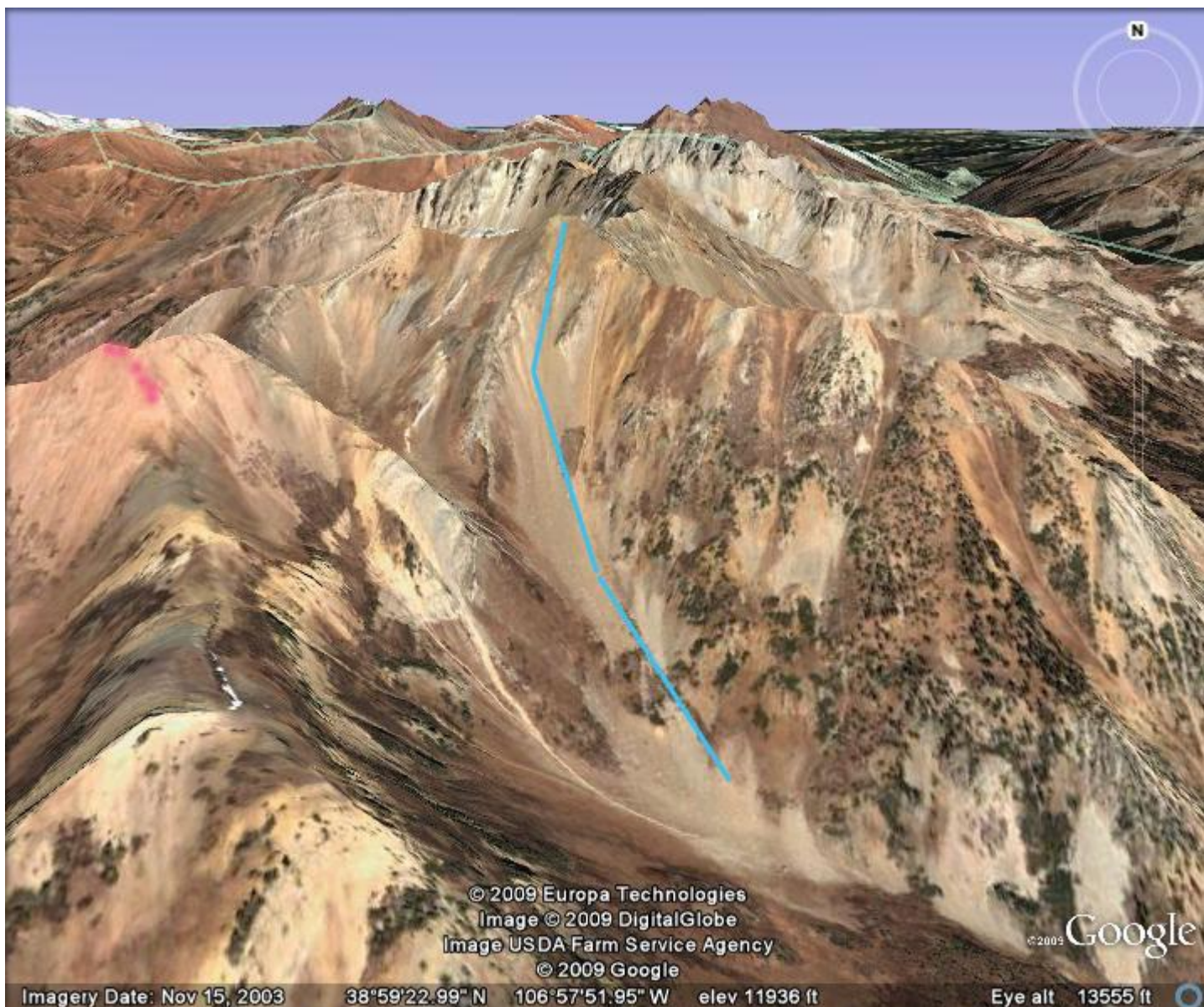
[White and White Rock](#)

[Queen Basin / White Rock](#)

Avery



Avery is an inspiring peak to look at even in the summer. This peak is famous for its distinctive diamond (subpeak), which is marked with the right blue line. The other blue line would be another good line for a low avy danger day. The yellow lines mark a bit more mellow lines that might be suitable for higher avy danger. The pink dots mark a ridge that's better accessed from Rustler's Gulch or Copper Creek drainage, with a line shown in the picture below.



© 2009 Europa Technologies
Image © 2009 DigitalGlobe
Image USDA Farm Service Agency
© 2009 Google

©2009 Google

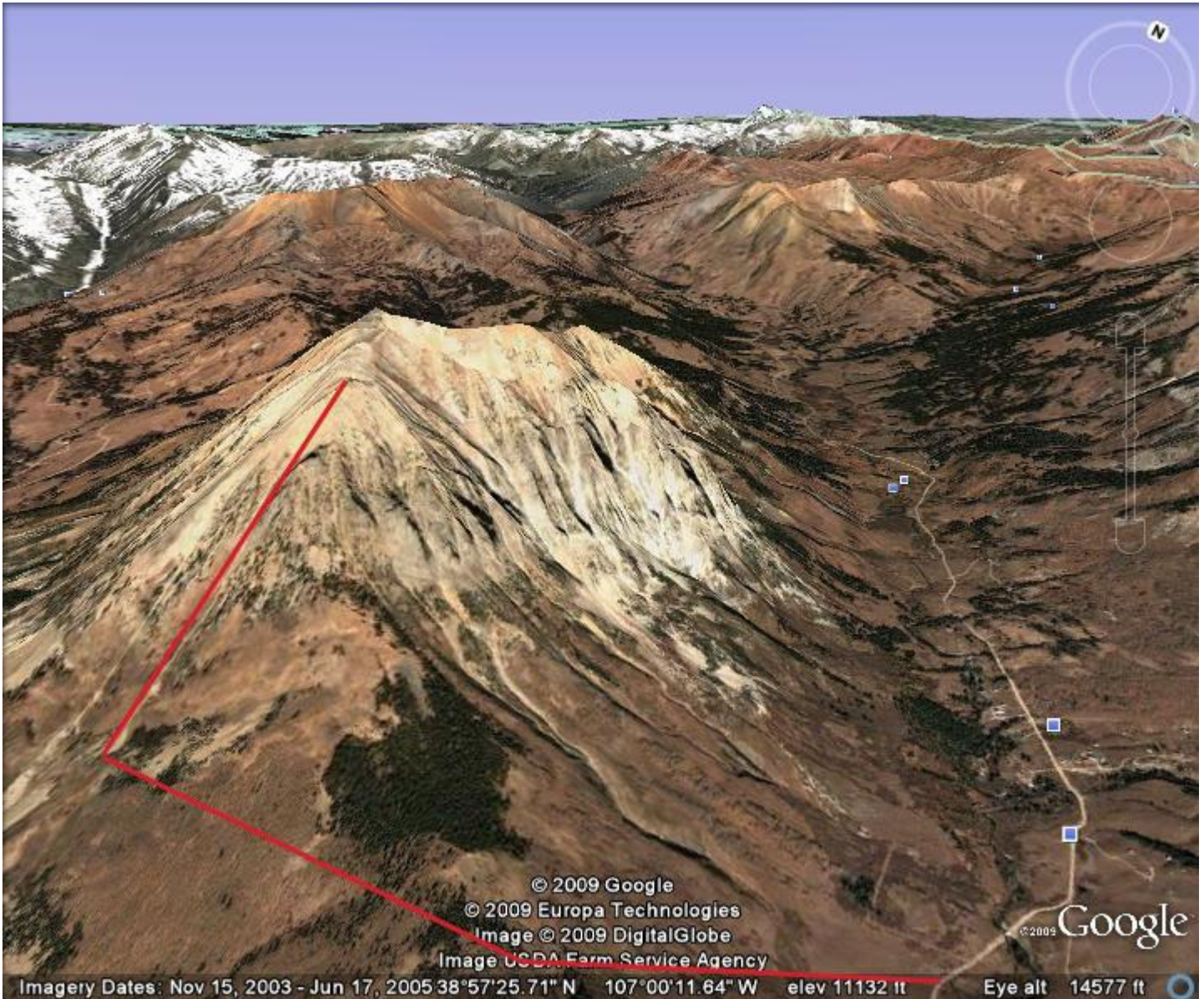
Imagery Date: Nov 15, 2003 38°59'22.99" N 106°57'51.95" W elev 11936 ft Eye alt 13555 ft

The pink dots in the picture above mark the top of the diamond on Avery. A line off the ridge further back makes a fun ski and is called the Camel Humps.

Links:

[Where the Peaks have No Names](#)

Gothic



Gothic is a fun mountain to ski on all sides. Although access for most of the lines is better achieved from Washington Gulch, it can be accessed from Gothic Road fairly easily. The best ascent route (marked in red) is to climb to the saddle between Gothic and Snodgrass and then ascend a line called the Spoon. The Spoon makes a nice descent route, even in February, but should be done with low avy danger. The East face (facing right in the picture) is a more serious, but fun, line which is best in spring snow with really stable avy conditions.

Links:

[Gothic Mountain](#)

[Another Fun Outing on Gothic](#)

Rustler's Gulch



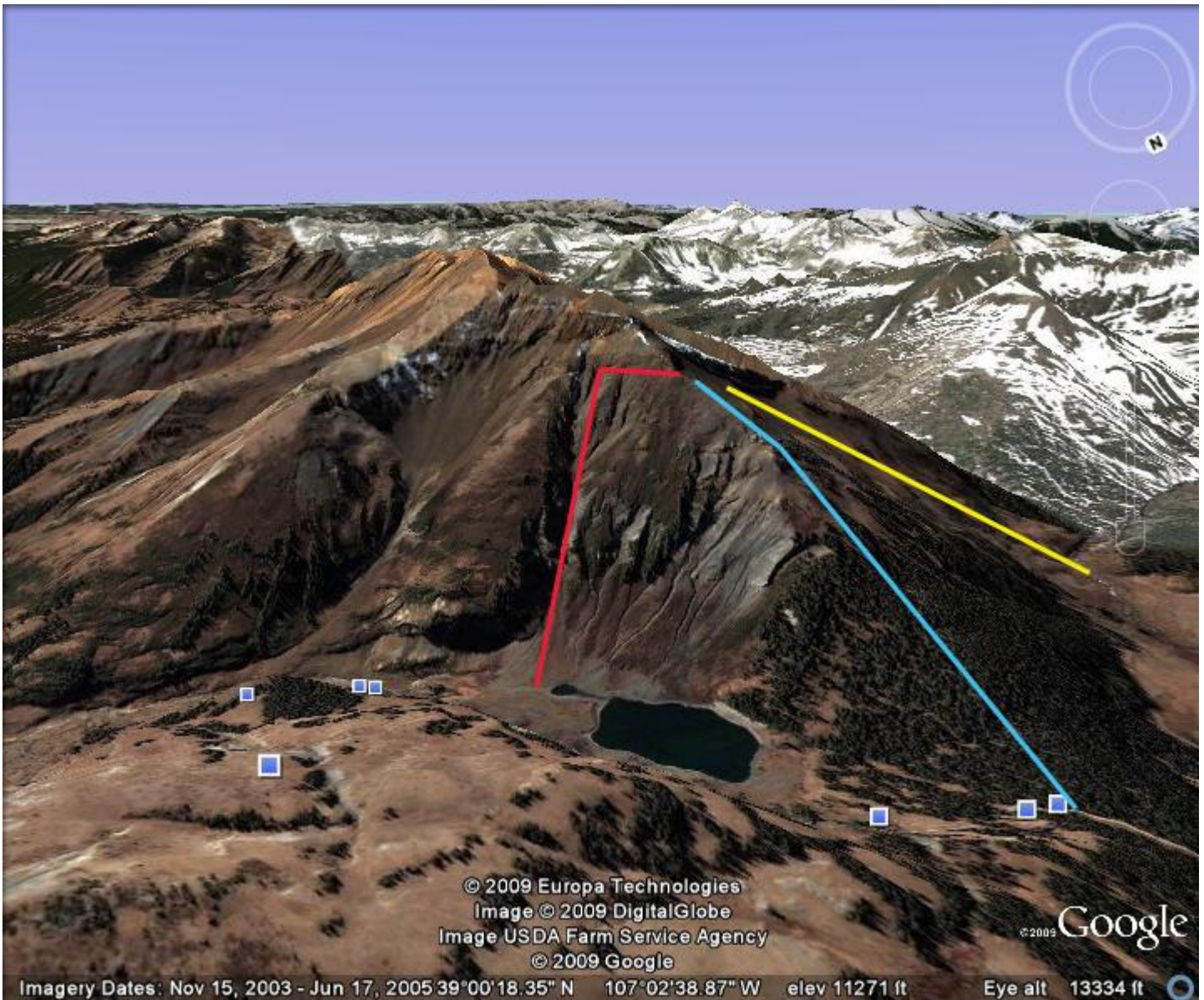
A bit farther up Gothic Road lies Rustler's Gulch, marked in red. This area can be a fun one to explore with a nice selection of steeper lines as well as glades. All runs are fairly short, so multiple ascents and descents are recommended. In the image to the left of Rustler's Gulch is Bellview. This can easily be ascended from Schofield Pass, marked in blue. Good descent routes off this peak are marked in yellow.

Links:

[Bellview](#)

[Precarious Peak](#)

Baldy



Baldy is another fun peak to explore on all sides and all aspects. Some lines that can be accessed from Gothic are the North Face (marked in red) and Halloween Bowl (marked in yellow). The North Face will bring you right back to Emerald Lake, shown in the picture. But, Halloween Bowl will put you on the other side of Schofield Pass. Either way, this peak will take you a bit longer to access and ski from Gothic compared to most of the other things mentioned. Still, it's a fun peak to play on. The best way to ascend the peak is from the top of Schofield Pass, as marked in blue. Gothic lies a few miles down the road to the left of the picture.

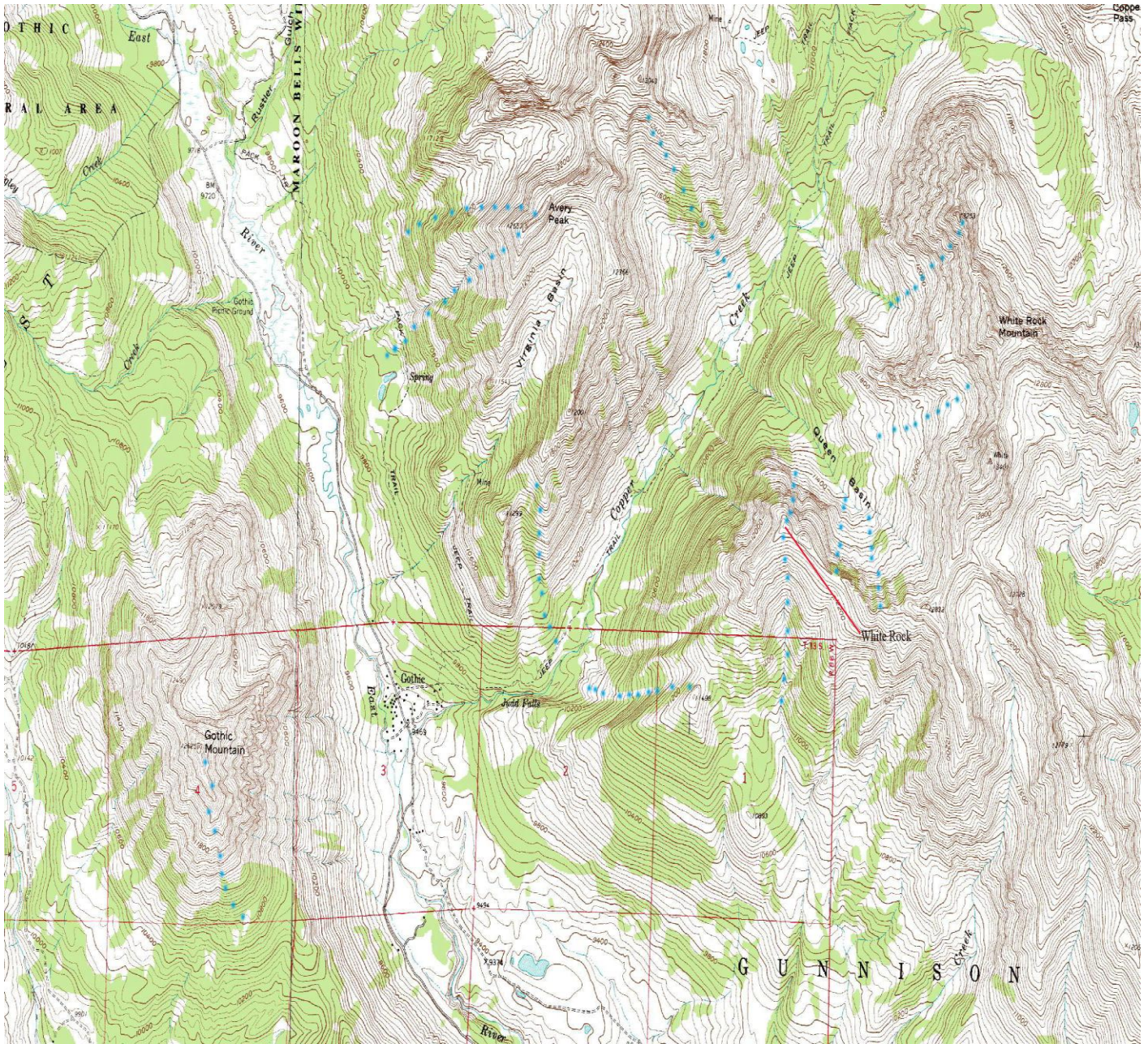
Links:

[Halloween Bowl](#)

[Finding the Emerald](#)

Topo Maps

Below are two topographic maps that show the area. I've marked some of the lines I've mentioned with blue dots on the topo maps. Please click on the map for a larger view.





Okay so....

Hopefully now folks who stay and want to play in Gothic now have some ideas of how to enjoy our winter playground! Okay, not go out and recreate!