

Mt. Bierstadt - Northwest Gully



Climbing mountains is dangerous! Please read the [Mountaineering Safety Page](#) and make sure you have a map+compass and can use them effectively. A GPS or cell phone can be very helpful with navigation but you should still be able to use a map+compass in case your device stops working.



(WINTER) HOLD ON! If you don't have much high-elevation, winter climbing experience, be careful in your planning and take a partner. Even the "easy" 14ers (Quandary, Sherman, Grays & Torreys) can be deadly in winter.

Difficulty:	Difficult Class 2 Ski: Advanced, D5 / R2 / II
Exposure:	2 of 6
Summit Elevation:	14,060 feet
Trailhead Elevation:	11,669 feet
Elevation Gain:	2,850 feet
Round-trip Length:	6.50 miles
Trailhead:	Guanella Pass
USGS Quad.:	Mount Evans
County Sheriff:	Clear Creek: 303-679-2376
National Forests:	Arapaho, Pike
Wilderness Area:	Mount Evans
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Trailhead

From the north: Take the Georgetown exit off of Interstate 70. Drive through Georgetown and follow the signs for the Guanella Pass Scenic Byway. Drive 12 miles to the top of Guanella Pass (11,700') and park in one of the two large, paved parking areas on either side of the road. The Bierstadt trail starts near the parking area on the east side of the road. The upper parking area (on the west side of the pass) has restrooms. **From the south:** Take US 285 west from Denver or east from Fairplay. Drive to the town of Grant which is about 12 miles west of Bailey. In Grant, turn north on the Guanella Pass Scenic Byway and drive approx. 13 miles to Guanella Pass.

Route

This seldom-climbed gully does not have a trail to the summit and is more difficult than the standard route. If you are comfortable with off-trail talus and want to try something a bit different on Bierstadt, it's a fun alternative.

Start by heading down the Bierstadt Trail. The great trail weaves through the willows and crosses Scott Gomer creek - [Photo #1](#). After crossing the creek, hike about .25 miles through the willows on the solid trail. At 11,800', the trail becomes steeper and you will exit the willows. The trail switchbacks up to 12,400' on a large shoulder northwest of the summit. From the shoulder, you can see the Sawtooth and Bierstadt. Continue up the trail as it curves around to the right and climbs south and east up the shoulder.

Near 13,300', leave the standard route by turning left and traversing across the slopes toward the bottom of the gully on the northwest face of Bierstadt. This traverse is straightforward unless there's fresh snow or ice. During snowy months, you will likely have to cross a few snow fields to reach the base of the gully. A few hundred feet below, the face drops off considerably and it's nearly 1,000 feet to the flats below the Sawtooth. [Photo #2](#) shows the route to the gully after you leave the Bierstadt trail. Once you reach the gully, be climbing up through the talus. Near 13,600', the gully becomes steeper and you must work harder to bypass some large rocks and small cliffs. There are several ways to get to the summit - [Photo #3](#). The gully actually splits into a couple of shallow gullies near the summit and I found the right side to be a bit easier.

Notes

When you hike down the Bierstadt Trail into Scott Gomer creek, you lose approximately 200' of elevation. Keep this in mind on your return route. The route can be dangerous in certain conditions. Be aware of the conditions as you cross from the Bierstadt trail to the gully and, when you reach the gully, make sure it is stable enough to climb. If you reach the gully and decide to turn back, traverse west back to the northwest slope and climb Bierstadt via the standard route. **IMPORTANT:** This route enters the [Mount Evans Wilderness](#) area. Wilderness areas have special regulations and restrictions for party size, dispersed camping, campfires, etc. Also, dog owners should read the wilderness information carefully because some wilderness areas prohibit dogs to be off-leash and/or limit how close dogs can be to lakes and streams. If you have questions about the Wilderness area, please contact a U.S. Forest Service office for the National Forest(s) listed above.

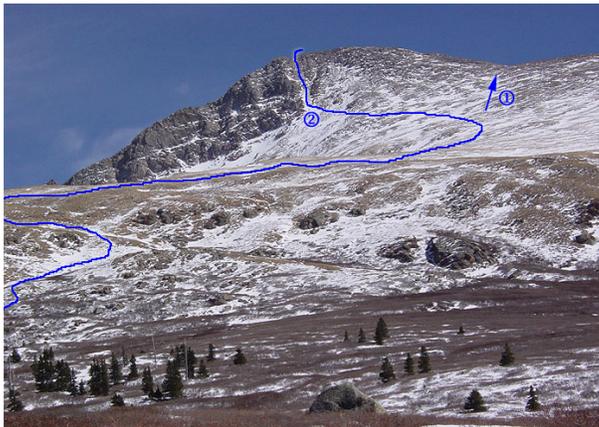
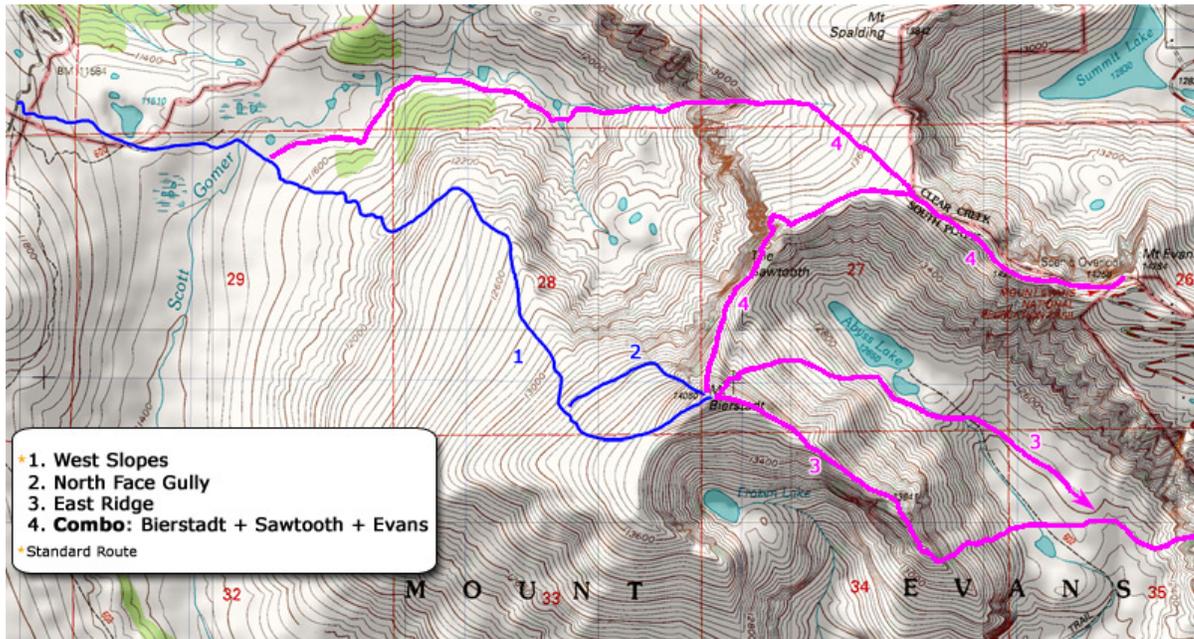


Photo #1: The gully route (#2) seen from 11,500' on the Bierstadt trail.



Photo #2: The gully seen from 13,500'.



Photo #3: A close-up of the gully and a couple of ways to the summit.

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