

## Guide Book Excerpts

### From Colorado Hut to Hut, Volume 1 Northern & Central Regions, by Brian Litz

#### ***Sangree M. Froelicher Hut***

HUT ELEVATION	11,630'
DATE BUILT	1998
SEASONS	Thanksgiving through April 30 (winter); July 1 through September 30 (summer)
CAPACITY	16
HUT LAYOUT	1 room with a double bed, 1 room with 4 single beds, in addition to 10 single beds in a communal sleeping area, all upstairs
HUT ESSENTIALS	Woodstove for heat, wood-burning cookstove with oven, propane cookstoves, all kitchenware, outhouse, photovoltaic electric lights

The Sangree M. Froelicher Hut, formerly the Belvedere Hut, has all of the ingredients for a fine hut outing for skiers of all persuasions. It has a splendid, relatively short approach tour. It offers an expansive panorama of the Collegiate Peaks of the Sawatch Range from its front deck and windows. It is surrounded by varied terrain with nearby telemark slopes, and there are short tours that quickly take you up onto safe ridges above tree line with even better views. And finally, north of the hut is gentle Buckeye Peak, a great introductory challenge for ski mountaineers. All this -- along with its close proximity to Summit County, Vail, and the Front Range--accounts for Sangree M. Froelicher's newfound celebrity among Colorado's huts.

Sangree M. Froelicher is located at the southern tail end of the Gore Range, north of Leadville on the eastern aspect of Chicago Ridge, which divides the Fremont Pass/Climax Mine road (CO 91) and the Tennessee Pass road (US 24).

From the ridge above the hut, you can look down onto the Ski Cooper ski area and Tennessee Pass. Presently, there is only one trail to the hut. In the future, additional trails may connect this hut with Ski Cooper and Vance's Cabin.

#### ***RECOMMENDED DAY TRIPS:***

**The entire area around the hut is ideal for exploration** -- just be careful of the steep slope east of the hut and the cornice-laden headwall above Buckeye Lake and Gulch. The slopes at the head of the valley, west and southwest of the hut, above the large switchback in the trail near 11,400 feet, cradle excellent telemark terrain. This includes the north-facing glades dropping off Elevation Point 11,577'. The top of the ridge west/northwest above the hut is a quick jaunt for skiers of all abilities.

And finally, consider climbing Buckeye Peak. Climb northwest from the hut and pass between Elevation Points 12,254' and 12,156', then head north along the crest of the ridge to the peak. This area is generally wind-scoured in winter and is almost free of avalanche hazard, but beware of potential slabby pockets of wind-worked snow between 12,200 and 12,400 feet. Consider traversing upward to the west below 12,200 feet along the contour line to the top of the small ridge that runs to the west. Then climb back to the north / northwest to the summit. The view from the summit includes the Gore Range, the Front Range, the Tenmile Range, the Mosquito Range, the Sangre de Cristos, the Sawatch Range, and the Elk Mountains--something not to be missed on a clear day!

## **Buckeye Gulch Trailhead to Sangree M. Froelicher Hut**

SEE MAP PAGES 124-125 AND 169

DIFFICULTY	Novice / Intermediate
TIME	2 to 4 hours
DISTANCE	3.5 miles
ELEVATIONS	TRAILHEAD: 10,360' SMF HU: 11,630' GAIN/LOSS: +1,470'
AVALANCHE	Minimal danger
MAPS	USGS 7.5': Leadville North, 1970; Climax, 1994 National Forest: San Isabel, White River Trails Illustrated: #109 (Breckenridge/Tennessee Pass); Map #126 (Holy Cross/Ruedi Reservoir)

### **TOUR OVERVIEW**

Buckeye Gulch makes for a wonderful tour. Within minutes of escaping the parking area and the rush of the highway, you enter a quiet, secluded valley that seems miles from civilization. The ascent is steady, though never overwhelming. Route-finding will keep you on your toes while never being labyrinthine. Descending this trail is a blast and can go quickly. Once our group made it out in just over 20 minutes, at "normal" speed.

### **DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD**

The trailhead is located on CO 91 between Copper Mountain and Leadville on the southern side of Fremont Pass. It is 4.3 miles north / northeast of the intersection of US 24 (Tennessee Pass) and CO 91 (Fremont Pass) on the very northern end of Leadville and 7.25 miles west of the actual summit of Fremont Pass on the west side of CO 91 near some homes and cabins. There is a signed parking area for 10th Mountain visitors.

### **THE ROUTE**

The trail is divided into three distinct sections, the first being the climb from the highway up through the lower narrow, steeper, southerly exposed canyon. At the 0.95-mile mark, an obvious and signed canyon-trail intersection is reached. From this point, take the left fork (the right fork goes to Buckeye Lake area) and ski almost due west up through the less taxing valley. In some areas the trail is a bit harder to follow, but in general it remains on the left (southern) side of the creek and drainage and travels along the edge of the steeper, wooded slopes.

The upper section of the tour travels in and out of stands of spruce and fir trees and is not too difficult to follow. At around 11,040 feet, the trail escapes the confines of the creek and switchbacks up through a lightly wooded clearing. This area and the north- and east-facing slopes above to the west and south are great for making turns. At around 11,400 feet the trail follows the contours of the valley and contours around the head of the valley in one large switchback that leaves you heading east/northeast on the final moderate ascent to the hut.

## **Sangree M. Froelicher Hut to Chalk Creek Traverse**

SEE MAP PAGES 124-125 AND 169

Advanced / Expert

TIME	3 to 6 hours
DISTANCE	4.5 miles
ELEVATIONS	SMF HU: 11,630' Chalk Creek TH: 10,600'

	GAIN/LOSS: +1,237'/-2,267'
AVALANCHE	Route crosses avalanche slopes; prone to skier-triggered avalanches during high-hazard periods
MAPS	USGS 7.5': Leadville North, 1970; Climax, 1994
	National Forest: San Isabel, White River
	Trails Illustrated: #109 (Breckenridge/Tennessee Pass); Map #126 (Holy Cross/Ruedi Reservoir)

## TOUR OVERVIEW

John Scahill and friends, who skied this route as an egress from the Sangree M. Froelicher Hut, suggested this sensational, adventure-packed tour and supplied the information about it. The tour could be skied as a route to the hut, though this is not recommended because you travel over short stretches of avalanche terrain that are best descended, not ascended.

Overall, this is a classic high-mountain tour with great views that extend the Buckeye Peak day tour into a high mountain ridge traverse that finishes with a powder descent through knockout glades.

Be forewarned, though, that this relatively short route at times walks a tightrope on ridges that are difficult to escape. The steep, unskiable terrain is exposed to the elements for much of its length, requiring skiers to do some thoughtful route-finding and the cornices don't make the task any easier. As a kicker, the route forces you to descend a short, unavoidable avalanche slope. Obviously, clear weather conditions and stability in the snowpack are desirable. Sound fun? For the right group, this is a superb excursion.

## DIRECTIONS TO TRAILHEAD

The parking area for shuttle cars is on the west (Leadville) side of Fremont Pass on CO 91, 8.4 miles north/northeast of the CO 91/US 24 intersection. At 3.15 miles downhill from the pass is a small valley off to the northwest. Park off the highway along the northwestern side of the road near the plowed Chalk Creek Trailhead parking area (marked with a sign). If you are driving downhill, this is to the right.

## THE ROUTE

The tour begins with an ascent of 12,867' Buckeye Peak. This is a straightforward ascent accomplished by climbing up from the hut over easy terrain onto the ridge to the west. Once on the ridge, follow it over gentle alpine terrain north to the summit. This area is generally windblown and may require walking. Of greatest concern to skiers on this ascent are wind-deposited pockets of snow that form between 12,200' and 12,400'. Often, the best way to avoid these is to traverse out to the northwest around them, but be careful.

From Buckeye's summit, descend along the ridge toward Elevation Point 12,684'. Pass Elevation Point 12,684' and make a right turn to the east. The route follows the crest of an east/west-running finger ridge off Elevation Point 12,684'.

To quote Scahill, "The easterly route along this ridge is fairly obvious; however, it should be noted that there is no escape off of this ridge. The terrain is rather steep on both the north and south sides, and likely prone to avalanche hazard."

Eventually, the narrow ridge metamorphoses into a broad, gladed, triangular face that cascades down to the highway. This transition point is probably the single most hazardous spot on the tour. Scahill continues, "The nose at the far eastern edge of the ridge must also be negotiated carefully as it drops about 60-80 feet into the trees. The best line we found was slightly north of east. As one descends, there are a few small, scraggly trees that can be used as guideposts." A word to the wise-ski through this area as expeditiously and as gingerly as possible.

Now that you have paid your dues, you get your reward in the form of 800 feet of sublime powder glade skiing. Work the terrain trending along the northern half of the triangular face down to around 11,000 feet.

The final challenge is found in choosing the right path from the 11,000-foot level to the trailhead. You cannot ski directly down through the creek drainages in this area, as the bottoms of the drainages tend to be gorgelike in their narrowness and possess impassable cliff bands-especially near the waterfall-that bar easy passage to the highway. The best route, according to Scahill, traverses north across the left (west) fork of Chalk Creek right around 11,000 feet. This may entail a short scramble up the south-facing slopes on the far side of the creek until gaining a heavily treed slope that gently feeds you down in an east/southeast direction.

After a few hundred yards of tree bashing, this opens up in flats where the power line runs through. Continue east, passing under the power line until you reach the gorge of main Chalk Creek. Turn upstream (north) and continue roughly 200 to 300 feet until you reach an obvious, gently sloping section leading down to the creek. A group of trees across the creek from this access point permits safe passage up the northeastern banks of the creek. Once across Chalk Creek, continue east until you gain the old four-wheel-drive road that leads back down to the highway and the trailhead.

An alternative descent route is to drop from the 11,000-foot level continuously down the densely timbered ski slopes until you reach the power line, which can be followed south to the highway-downstream of the parking area several hundred yards. This entails skiing down through heavy timber.

## **From HutSki.com**

### ***Buckeye Gulch Trailhead to Sangree M. Froelicher Hut***

DIFFICULTY	Intermediate
TIME	3 hours up, 1.5 hours down
DISTANCE	3 miles
ELEVATION GAIN	15,000 feet

Start from Buckeye Gulch Trailhead with climbing skins and follow snow covered Buckeye Gulch Road up the right (easterly) side of Buckeye Gulch. One mile from the trailhead, turn left (W) on Road 137A. Stay on the snow covered road as it crosses the creek, then follow the well marked (blue diamonds) route as it stays on the road for a short distance, then leaves the road to the left and climbs the valley through timber on the south side of the creek. The trail then swings north and east to the hut. As an option, you can also climb a more direct route to the hut if you're certain of the location or are using GPS.

REVERSE ROUTE : Ski SW from the hut and take care to identify the blue diamonds of the marked trail, which traverses a bit then drops in a wide loop to the drainage, where you pick up Road 137 A and ski snow covered roads out to the Buckeye Gulch trailhead.

### ***Sangree Highroute from Ski Cooper Trailhead***

DIFFICULTY: Advanced

TIME: 6 hours

DISTANCE: 6 1/2 miles

ELEVATION GAIN: 1, 600 feet

One of 10th Mountain's tougher routes, but worth the effort. Rewards: Amazing views and plenty of true alpine touring above timberline. Travel to the Ski Cooper trailhead. Walk a few hundred feet from trailhead parking to the Cooper Hill Nordic Center, which is located on the southwest edge of the large base area parking lot. You start the route on one of the designated nordic trails, so obtain a trail map at the Nordic Center in case you get confused while navigating. From the Nordic Center, ski the Cooper Loop trail southeasterly. Soon you'll be on a well defined summer road. Note signs for Tennessee Pass Cookhouse at 1 1/4 mile from start, but stay on road .

Take care just after Cookhouse to NOT swing southwest, but rather stay on summer road as it continues SE then swings E as a shelf road above East Tennessee Creek. Continue east to cross creek over culvert at 10,750'.

Just past culvert, continue east and north at two road intersections as you continue to climb through timber on a summer road that parallels the right side of the creek. At 3/4 mile from the culvert you'll break into a clearing where you leave the road and make a critical swing southeast. Slightly more aggressive climbing begins here as you head up through forest for a few hundred feet then break into a large logged area. Take the fall line up the logged area. Near the top of the logged area ski a short traverse east and enter a tongue of trees at 11,530' and continue easterly through light timber for a short distance to another open area. Climb the right side of the open area to High Mountain Saddle, 11,645', and turn left (east) to enter the timber again. Climb east up through light timber for a few hundred yards to timberline on the end of a ridge.

Now your alpine tour begins. Looking southeast you're facing a large basin. Take a climbing contour into the head of the basin, eventually reaching a point just below the highpoint of the saddle at the east crest of the basin. Take a definitive swing south here and follow a mostly level route 1/4 mile to Sangree Saddle (12,070'). Drop from Sangree Saddle 1/2 mile south and southeast to Sangree Hut.

### ***Sangree Hut Regional Skiing and Day Trips***

Much south facing and wind blasted snow in this area makes it tough to find good skiing. If your quest is for turns, take care to analyze where quality snow might be hiding. After the rare windless snowstorm, vast low angled slopes above timberline might make your dreams reality. Otherwise, explore different exposures below the hut, or check out the lightly timbered area to the northwest of Sangree Saddle (take care here as return to the hut involves climbing out of a drainage. If you're after tours more than turns, summit the various highpoints north from the hut, with an ultimate goal being Buckeye Peak. Given stable avalanche conditions, expert backcountry skiers might find larger and steeper runs in the area of upper Buckeye Gulch. All these areas are obvious on our free HutSki.com map shown above, but we only note them in general terms due to the shifting quality and safety of the snowpack.

(Note, the correct name for this hut is Sangree M. Froelicher. Folks also call it the "Sangree" or "Sangree's," Sangre is the wrong spelling. Sangree is pronounced as in "sang the song.")