

Juniper Creek

Scale: 1: 50,000

(C) Morgan Hite, Hesperus Arts (www.hesperus-wild.org), August 2013.
Projection/datum: UTM Zone 9 North/NAD83

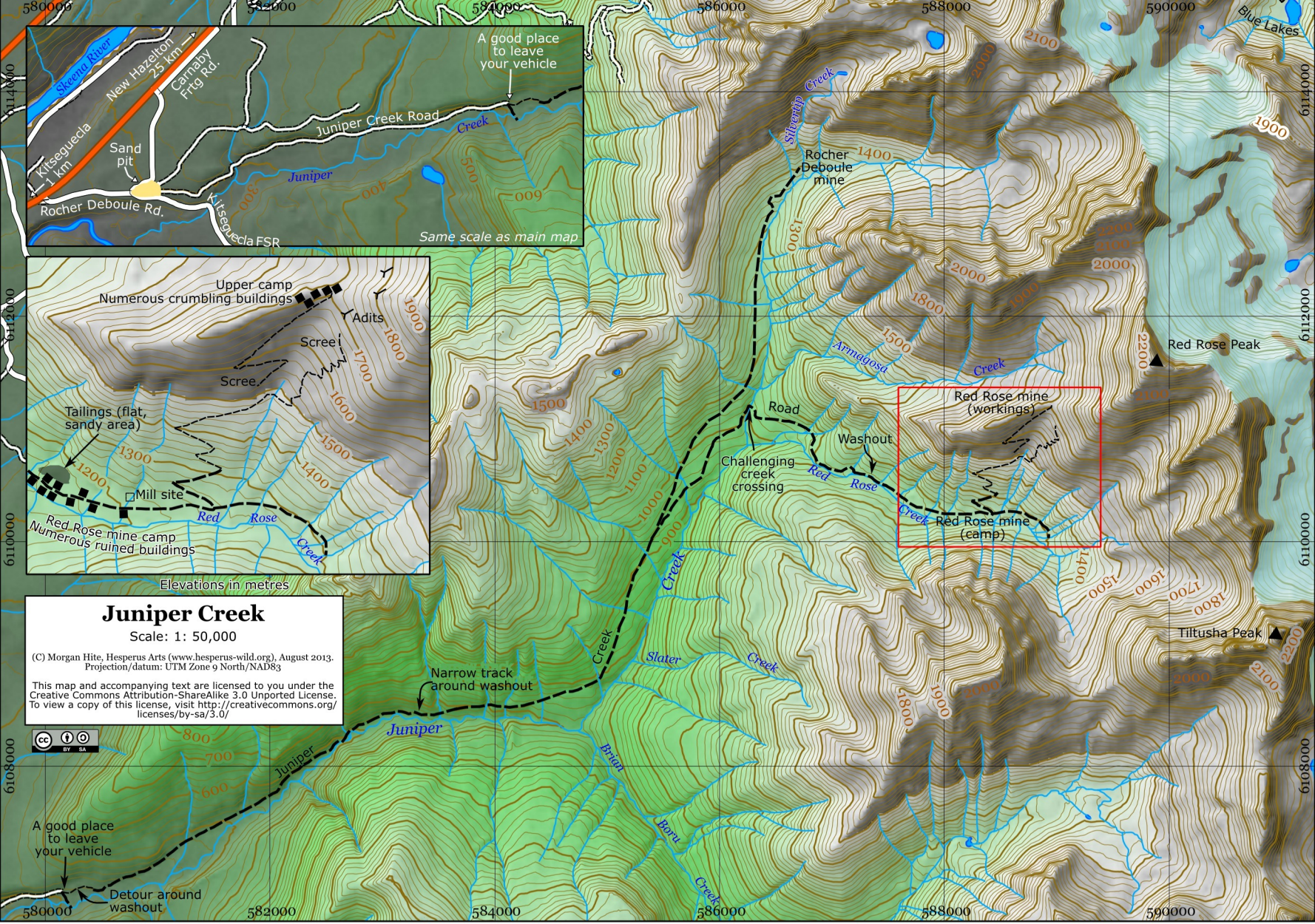
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A good place to leave your vehicle

Detour around washout

Narrow track around washout



Juniper Creek and the Red Rose Mine

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Once upon a time the old road up Juniper Creek was the main highway to a working mine situated in extreme conditions. High above treeline in the Rocher Deboile range chunks of tungsten were cherished, while chunks of urananite, a form of uranium, were just tossed down the slope.

It all ended when the Red Rose mine closed in the 1954. Visiting the site today you might get the impression that at that fateful hour they just shut down and walked out, because what remains is like a ghost town at treeline, some 11 km in and 1000 metres up in elevation from where you can presently drive your car.

Just east of the village of Kitseguella on Highway 16 (about 25 km west of New Hazelton), turn south on the Rocher Deboile Rd. After about a kilometre, come to a sand pit on the left, where the old road begins. Your vehicle's clearance permitting, you can still drive the next 3 km or so as it winds through mudholes and under low branches. Bear right at the one fork. Park where the road becomes overgrown, and ATVers have carved a detour to the left to get around a washout.

Walking the detour brings you back shortly to the old road, and its steady grade makes for easy walking. There are other washouts ahead, but none are difficult for a hiker. After about 7 km, the road divides, the left fork ascending and going north to another old mine site. Take the right fork, which descends slightly and turns east for Red Rose. Not long after this you will encounter the only serious obstacle on the route: crossing Juniper Creek itself. It's a decent, wet foot crossing. (In 2012 there were also several handy fallen trees that hikers with good balance could take their chances on.)

The road crosses over Red Rose Creek for a short distance just before it gets to the mine's lower camp, and instead of making two crossings you can bushwack upstream, keeping Red Rose Creek on your right, until the road crosses back to your side.

Entering the lower camp area, you will find many log buildings, all of which have collapsed, as well as the remains of a tailings pond (a large sandy area north of the road) and, a few hundred metres up-valley, the site of the mill.

The mine itself, however, was at a far higher, more exposed, and precarious location, at a camp above you to the north in a saddle at 1700 m. (A powerline connected the two, and ore was trundled down to the mill on a tramline.) The remains of the road continue on this upper camp, switchbacking up across a vast scree slope for another kilometre and a half to the spooky buildings still perched on the saddle. All the adits (tunnels) are sealed but at one of them, near these buildings, you can find, spilling out of an old pipe, water that is so saturated with copper that it is precipitating the blue-green mineral malachite into a pool.

Despite their exposed position, the old buildings in the saddle are in much better shape than those down in the lower camp – most still having intact roofs. In case you're imagining that you could, in the event of an emergency, spend the night in one of these buildings, let me just say it would have to be one hell of an emergency. They are very messy. (As well, this whole site is still owned by a mining company, so

be aware that you may be trespassing.)

Taken together, the upper and lower camps might not be the most dangerous place I've ever been in the backcountry, but they're certainly the most dangerous *man-made* place. All boards on the ground have multiple nails sticking out of them (somehow they're always pointing up), and everything is loose and unstable. It goes without saying that you don't want to enter old shafts or tunnels. And then there's the radiation...

Urananite is present at Red Rose in small quantities in the same vein that holds the tungsten. If you take a radiation dosimeter up there with you, you can find isolated points in the tailings, or in the waste piles of rock outside the adits, where the radiation is a bit higher than background. It's no more than you would get flying in a jetliner at 36,000', but it does get you thinking.

Going in to Red Rose and back is definitely a long day. It's about 11 km one way. You could consider backpacking in your overnight gear for a more relaxed explore! The area also provides access to Red Rose and Tiltusha Peaks.