

The Railfan's Guide to Cajon Pass

By Al Bowen

Part Seven: Summit to Victorville

In this segment we will touch on some of the better viewing locations between Summit and the Victorville Station. The major difference between this segment and the others I've written is the development of the areas adjoining the tracks. Places that just a few years ago, were "out in the boonies," are now surrounded by housing or commercial developments.

Leaving Summit, continue East on Highway 138, turning left onto Summit Valley Road, (about 1 3/4 miles east of Summit). There is a convenience store at the intersection. On Summit Valley Road, continue Northeast as it winds up the hills out of the Valley. Upon crossing the top of the hills, you will see the BNSF lines in front of you. A dirt road angles off to the left and leads to the Martinez Spur about a 1/4 mile off the Summit Valley Road. This spur is actually the remains of the earlier mainline (pre-1972). It is used for MOW storage, helper turnarounds, and other car set-outs. There is a grade crossing here, but Security denies public use. This area is like Summit for access. Since there are a number of better locations for viewing trains, it is nice to spot this, but overall it isn't worth the hassle of the Security rules to try to get close at this spot.

Continue east on Summit Valley Road. The pavement stops and starts over the next few miles. In several places, the road and the rail-line run very close together and you can get some nice photo's of trains snaking along the edge of the hills. When the pavement resumes fully (about 4 miles from Martinez Spur), a paved road branches off to the left leading to the terminal of the California Aqueduct. When this road reaches the BNSF lines, there is a locked gate and beyond that a grade crossing. This crossing is reserved for the Aqueduct workers who need to get back and forth on their roadway. This is at the 49 milepost, where the tracks begin their turn to the north for the run to Victorville. Often, there is a Security post here to prevent misuse of the crossing. However this is a great place to catch trains coming around the bend from the desert, into Summit Valley. You can drive right up to the gate, and sit on the gate or (depending on the guard) move around inside the crossing area to get the background you want in your photos.

Continuing up the Summit Valley Road, you will pass the Hesperia Airport and then climb a little slope that puts you right beside the BNSF line. Turning south along the access road will put you on a small hill overlooking the tracks at the 48 milepost. From this point, you can see a couple of miles to the north and about a mile to the south. This makes for great shots of full-length trains. Many of my roster shots were done here.

Continuing north, the road runs right beside the tracks to the 45 milepost at Hesperia. If you want pictures of the Cushenbury Line going out to Lucerne Valley, you can shoot some here at the 45. It is possible to follow the Cushenbury Line on residential streets, and finally on Rock Springs Road leaving Hesperia to the east. Traffic on this line is limited to a couple of Locals a week to the cement mills located about 25 miles out.

To follow the main line further, you must cross over the tracks at the Main Street Overpass. You can then continue north on Hesperia Road (currently under construction but due to reopen shortly) beside the tracks on the west side. About 2 miles north of the Main street bridge, the tracks angle away from Hesperia Road. Unless you want to shoot photo's of that specific section, stay on Hesperia Road to the intersection with Bear Valley Road. Turn right on Bear Valley Road and then turn left on Ridgecrest Road, which is the first street after crossing the tracks again. There is a light at this intersection, and a Large Mormon Church on the Northeast corner. Travel north on Ridgecrest Road passing a major housing development on your right (Spring Valley Lake). After cresting a hill, the road makes a sweeping right turn to go into the Mojave Narrows Regional Park. Just as you enter that turn, there is a dirt road to the left that you turn onto. You can see the Frost track crossover in front of you at that point. The dirt roads here show a lot of damage from even the smallest rain storm so proceed carefully in bad weather. Park outside the railroad fence and you

can hike around the crossing to get the photo's you want. Be careful if you get up on the South Track bridge area, as you don't have a large margin of room for you and a train.

Retrace your route to Bear Valley Road and proceed west to Interstate 15. Take I-15 North to the 'D' street exit and turn right at the bottom of the ramp. D Street is old Highway 66 in Victorville, and you will see the rail-line running beside the street, coming into town from Barstow. In the center of "Old-Town" Victorville there is a Route 66 Museum across the street from the Amtrak stop. Park in the RR Station parking area, and you can walk around the yard, the station, the park, and the 'caboose', taking all the photo's you desire. If you cross the tracks and drive east on the north side of the rail-line, past the station, and the spurs in that area, you can drive fairly close to where the tracks emerge from the "Upper Narrows". This is the place where the Mojave River and the tracks squeeze through a relatively tight cut in the hills as they enter Victorville. A short walk can yield some pretty nice "nature & trains" photo's. Driving west from the station area, once you cross under the Interstate, you are headed for Barstow on Old Highway 66.