

# **Railfans Guide to the West Slope**

**Gallitzin, PA – Johnstown, PA**  
**Frequencies 160.800 & 161.070**

<b>NS PITTSBURGH LINE</b>		
<b>Station</b>	<b>Milepost</b>	<b>Comments</b>
DED 245.5	245.5	- Defect Detector
Gallitzin	248.1	<a href="#">Gallitzin Tunnels Park</a>
CP AR/UN	248.4	
CP MO	250.5	
Cresson	251.0	Engine Facility / RJC
Lilly	253.1	- Defect Detector
Cassandra	255.9	
BC	256.8	
Portage	258.9	- Defect Detector
NY	259.0	
Summerhill	263.9	
South Fork	266.1	South Fork Secondary
Mineral Point	268.1	- Defect Detector
Conemaugh	273.2	
Johnstown	275.1	Amtrak Station

## **Norfolk Southern West Slope**

The West Slope is a triple track mainline in Central Pennsylvania between Gallitzin and Johnstown along the NS Pittsburgh Line stretching from Harrisburg in the east to Pittsburgh in the west. This is an 11 stop guide to railfan locations along the line as well as an extra section dedicated to chasing trains down the 31 mile long South Fork secondary to Central City. The authors of this guide do not condone trespassing in any way.

## **Gallitzin**

The main line is split between two tunnels through the summit in Gallitzin. Track 1 is located in the New Portage Tunnel which is on the far side of town from the [Gallitzin Park](#) and [Tunnel Inn](#) near AR Tower. Practically 100% of the traffic will be eastbound due to a steep 2.2% grade through the tunnel. Track 1 is excellent in the morning on this side of town for photography. The Allegheny Tunnel which was reconstructed and double tracked in 1994 hosts tracks 2 and 3. Photography is particularly difficult for westbound traffic during the morning because the sun rises over the tunnels. For family friendly railfanning the park above the Allegheny tunnel is a good location. The defect detector at milepost 245.5 will inform you which track a train is so you can plan your location with a slight warning.

## **Cresson**

Take SR 1015 out of town to RT 53. Turn left towards Cresson. You will pass over the mainline at MP 249. There are some shots available from the bridge and cement wall adjacent to the tracks. Follow 53 into town and turn left.

The Cresson Engine Terminal is the main highlight in Cresson which offers an observation platform in town on the south side of the tracks which is ideal for viewing the mainline and facilities. The platform is best in the morning. In the afternoon, the pump house is a good location from the north side of the tracks. The pump house, which is located across the tracks from the Station Inn is easily accessible from the road. The backside of the wye in the afternoon is ideal for photos of the engine terminal. RJ Corman occasionally runs trains down the Irvona Secondary to the east of Cresson. If there are empty hoppers on 5 West, RJC will most likely run down the Secondary within a few days.

## **Carneys Crossing**

Take RT 53 south out of town. Just before Lilly there is a crossroads. Carneys Crossing a right hand turn off of RT 53 south. The tracks are straight ahead. Just as in Cresson the south side is good in the morning and the north side is good in the afternoon. The detector is east of the crossing.

## **Lilly**

Turn south onto RT 53 and head into Lilly. In Lilly RT 53 turns left into town, you want to turn right. Another left turn will take you to the trash dump and a view of the Pennsy signal bridge. This is a morning only shot of the signal bridge. The bridge over the tracks offers a nice view to the east as well.

## **Cassandra**

Once on RT 53 south you will head out of Lilly and wind up the road and then back down. Look for the Cassandra Railfan Overlook sign on the right side of the unusual intersection and make a hard right turn. You will head under the mainline and into town where you will pass the [Overlook Motel](#). Continue to the intersection and turn right at the post office. This will take you straight to the overlook. Cassandra is one of the premium locations on the West Slope. It offers a relaxing atmosphere with exciting train action. The Lilly detector will offer a brief notice of westbound traffic and it takes nearly 10 minutes for a train to travel the three mile straightaway grade from the west. John, the mayor of town, is a very nice man and runs the store in town which offers hats and t-shirts as well as nice rooms that are very reasonably priced. Don't forget to sign the guest book.

## **Portage**

Once again return to RT 53 south. After approximately 2 miles you will enter Portage and find RT 164. Make a right turn onto RT 164 and head past the Sheetz. After going over the track turn right and go to the end of the street.

This location is known as NY. NY is generally not a very interesting location but does offer an evening view of the signals at the defect detector. The tracks you crossed in town head to the Sonman Mine and reconnect to the mainline in Jamestown at BC. The SD80MACs occasionally make runs through the tipple at Sonman so be aware that they may be in town so check the mine just in case they make an appearance.

## **Summerhill**

After returning to RT 53 south turn left and head down the road about 6 miles into the town of Summerhill which offers two locations.

The first location is known as 'The Rocks'. On RT 53 you will see a stone viaduct to the right. Go a bit further down the road and make a right onto Tunnel St. You will pass under the mainline twice before finding a small dirt road on your right. That dirt road will take you to the rocks overlooking the viaduct which is a great location for morning light on east bounds.

The second location is on Main St. which is a right turn off of RT 53 in town. This will take you to the unique signal bridge at MP 263.7 Photography is generally good from any location around the bridge depending on the time of day. The store on the south side of the tracks offers local goods such as hoagies, snacks, and the infamous Cambria County Yost Dutchmaid GOBS.

## **South Fork**

From RT 53 south head to the interchange of RT 219 where RT 53 ends and continue straight into the town of South Fork. This will take you to the wye.

There are a few good locations in South Fork. The first of them is the wye which is a great location for morning light. The old bridge abutment overlooking the wye offers a great view of the curve and tracks 2 and 3. The Portage and Mineral Point detectors will offer warning of approaching trains.

The second location is from the wye itself which offers a few locations. The east leg of the wye offers views of the mainline. Maple Street which is right around the corner is a good place to get photos of the SD80MACs entering and leaving the yard. The crossing offers a view of the power in the yard. The yard is posted as No Trespassing. Acknowledge crews and be careful.

The South Fork Secondary has its own guide for operations so reference that if you decide to chase the SD80MACs down the line from South Fork.

## **Conemaugh**

Continue west through South Fork and cross the Lamps Bride and follow the road up the hill. At the top you will encounter a 5-way intersection. Take the road that bears slightly to the right to Franklin. Follow this road DOWN to Mineral Point. In Franklin you will see the tracks across the river. Take a left onto SR 271 which will take you there. A right turn off the bride will take you to the tracks.

This is a great evening location. This is also the location where eastbound trains add helpers if needed. You can also wash the car if train traffic is low.

## **Woodvale**

After returning to RT 271 south, turn right and right again after heading over the bridge. Following the mill you will need to make another right turn into an alley and another right at the wall will take you to a parking lot.

This is a good morning location as long as nothing is stored on the track. Be aware that this lot is privately owned so you may be asked to leave. Take care of the area so we can all enjoy the location without making the property owners angry.

## **Johnstown**

In order to get to the last location on this guide you will have to return to RT 271 south. Stay on 271 to Big V Surplus and follow the zigzag across the Conemaugh River. This will take you over the CB&L track at the Washington St. interchange yard. CSX will usually be in town Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Sundays before noon. RT 271 heads left however you will want to go right onto Washington Street. After two lights make a right turn at the third light. You will head over the Conemaugh River, make a left.

This is the Johnstown Amtrak Station. The old stone bridge is just west of the station platform. Photos can be taken of eastbound trains on track 2 from the hole in the fence. Photos of the old stone bridge are best in the afternoon.

## **Staying Overnight**

Below are a few selected locations which will be helpful in finding somewhere to stay for the night. Each of them is unique and caters to railfans along the line. All of them offer very good rooms and services needed whether you are railfanning alone or with a family.

### **Cassandra Overlook Motel**

116 Portage Street, Cassandra, PA

814.736.4880 - [Website](#)

### **The Station Inn B&B**

827 Front Street, Cresson, PA

814.886.4757 - [Website](#)

### **The Tunnel Inn**

702 Jackson Street, Gallitzin, PA

814.884.2975 - [Website](#)

## **Other Railfan Links**

Below are some other websites which make be useful when looking for more information and photos from the areas covered in this railfan guide.

### **NSWestSlope Yahoo! Group**

Email community discussing daily operations- [Website](#)

### **Railpictures.net**

Comprehensive photography database- [Website](#)

### **RailroadForums.com**

Free online bulletin board for railfans- [Website](#)

### **Railpace Newsmagazine**

Back issues go along perfect with this guide for under \$15 - [Website](#)

- May, 1992 – Horseshoe Curve
- September, 1995 – Conemaugh to South Fork
- January, 1996 – Summerhill to Cassandra
- February, 1996 – Lilly to Gallitzin

## **Notes**