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Introduction


More than 140,000 miles of railroad tracks crisscross the United States, and they offer a great opportunity to observe America's fascinating railroads. This is a great show for so many reasons! The giant locomotives that pack more than 4,000 horsepower each are amazing machines. The trains are always different, whether they're mixed freight, intermodal shipping containers, unit coal trains, new autos, or something else. And the cargoes can be equally fascinating—from ubiquitous grain to make bread and coal to burn for making electrical power to airliner fuselages. Best of all, American railroads are busier than ever in the 21st century. They're the primary conduits for manufactured goods, raw materials, and in some corridors, people. The chance of seeing trains is good—if you know where to go to watch.

Finding a good spot to see this traveling show of commerce can be difficult.

The community depot and the knowledgeable freight or passenger agent residing within are things of the past. Railroad yards are private property, and they can be dangerous if you're not savvy to the comings and goings of freight cars. Security around railroad tracks is tighter than ever, and some states have strict no-trespassing laws when it comes to railroads.

This hot spots guidebook can point you toward the best places to watch trains: America's busy junctions, its most scenic locations, and the growing number of formalized train-watching pavilions that have been built to welcome you. Whether you are a novice train watcher or a veteran railfan, this guide gives you the most basic tool for a successful train-watching experience—good information.

Prepared by experienced railfans who know the areas and the railroads, you'll learn the best places to watch trains from one end of the country to the other. Have fun watching America's railroads, be safe, and we'll see you trackside!



Jim Wrinn, Editor

TRAINS

Williams

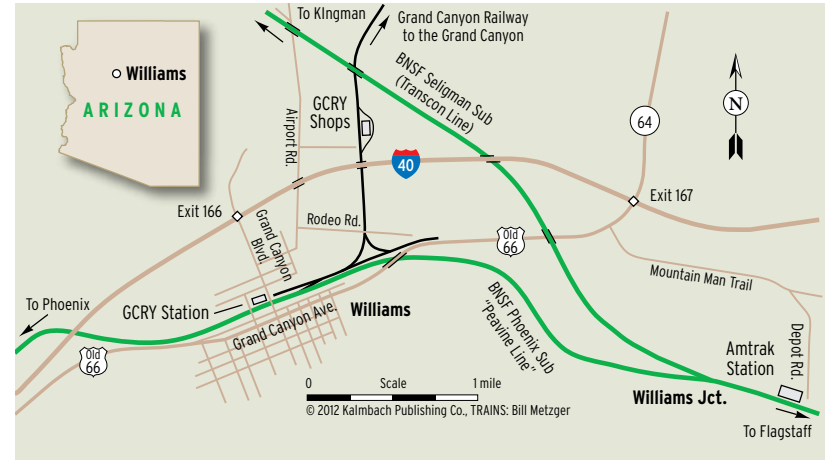


Elrond Lawrence

Williams hosts BNSF's busy Chicago-LA Transcon and the railway's Peavine Line to Phoenix. It's also home to the popular Grand Canyon Railway tourist railroad. All three routes are former Santa Fe Railway trackage. The Phoenix Line and the Grand Canyon Railway both pass through Williams' charming and historic downtown. Santa Fe relocated its Chicago-Los Angeles route in 1960, and today's Transcon skirts around town on the north end.

ACTIVITY: Intermodal is king on BNSF, but manifest, unit grain, and auto trains are also a frequent sight. Between 80–100 trains roll past on the Transcon every 24 hours, while the Peavine carries 10–12 trains a day. The Grand Canyon Railway runs a daily train to its namesake attraction. Its steam power is no longer a daily sight—most trains are powered by ex-Amtrak F40PHs—but 2-8-2 No. 4960 is used on special occasions. Amtrak's daily *Southwest Chief* stops in East Williams, a few miles from town.

TRAIN-WATCHING SPOTS: Williams lies in the Kaibab National Forest and great railfanning locations abound. A popular spot is Williams Junction, a few miles east of town, where the Phoenix Line meets the Los Angeles-Chicago Transcon. To get there, drive east on old Route 66 (East Bill Williams Avenue), turn right on Mountain Man Trail (Forest Service Road 51A), and follow it to Depot Road, which heads south to the BNSF main lines. Another good spot can be found along Airport Road north of town, where Transcon freights blast by on a high fill. In downtown Williams, Grand Canyon and Peavine trains can easily be viewed at the Grand Canyon Railway's depot and Harvey House beside North Grand Canyon Boulevard.



Williams is located in northern Arizona's Kaibab Forest about 30 miles west of Flagstaff.

SAFETY: Be on constant alert for high-speed BNSF trains. Several access roads have recently been gated and may not always be passable.

RAILROAD FREQUENCIES: BNSF: 160.935 (road), 160.335 and 160.260 (PBX), 161.370 (road, Phoenix); Grand Canyon: 160.350 (road)

TO DO: Williams is a Route 66 town, and its historic downtown reflects that heritage with unique shops, diners, soda fountains, and hotels both quirky and of the chain variety. Oh, and the Grand Canyon is about 60 miles away.

NEARBY: The beautiful La Posada Harvey House resort is 90 miles east in Winslow and makes for a great day-trip. Vintage FP7s and spectacular desert scenery can be found at the Verde Canyon Railroad in Clarkdale about 80 miles southeast.

DIRECTIONS: Eastbound, take Exit 161 off I-40 and drive West Bill Williams Avenue (Route 66) into downtown Williams. Westbound I-40 drivers should take Exit 165 and turn left, following Route 66 into town.

Denver



Mike Danneman

The Denver-Front Range region features many train-watching locations on the BNSF and UP lines radiating out of the metro area. The former Rio Grande main line heads west into the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains from North Yard. Spectacular scenery awaits the train watcher, and the line hosts Amtrak's *California Zephyr* for those wanting a beautiful train ride. A busy, mostly coal-hauling main line known as the Joint Line heads south featuring both UP and BNSF trains. The busiest route out of Denver heads east: the BNSF main to Brush, which sees freight, coal, and passenger traffic. Other rail lines include the former Colorado & Southern main, now also BNSF, through Boulder to Cheyenne, Wyo. Parallel to the east is UP's Denver to Cheyenne route through Greeley. UP's former Kansas Pacific line also traverses eastward out of Denver to Salina, Kans.

ACTIVITY: There are 10–15 trains a day on the Moffat Line, which includes BNSF freights and Amtrak. The busy Joint Line sees 30–40 trains per day. The Brush Sub sees 40–45 trains in 24 hours. BNSF's former C&S line to Cheyenne sees about 6 trains per day. Additional ballast trains and stack trains can be seen, but not daily. UP's Denver to Cheyenne route has about 10–12 trains per day, not including locals.

TRAIN-WATCHING SPOTS: Coal Creek Canyon and Big 10 curves are a great place to watch trains climb a 2 percent grade combined with 10 degree curves. UP trains, along with a pair each of BNSF and Amtrak trains, give the line some variety. Both locations can be reached via Highway 72 west of Denver. Open space provides some access to the Big 10 area, but only on foot. A good location to watch trains traversing the loop at Coal Creek Canyon is from Blue



Denver is nestled at the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains in north-central Colorado.

Mountain Drive, south off Highway 72. Another location for BNSF traffic is at Barr. Certain times of the year, Barr Lake provides a nice reflection of passing trains for photographers. Also, several overpasses in downtown Denver provide safe places to watch trains headed over the Joint Line.

RAILROAD FREQUENCIES: BNSF: 160.920 (Moffat Sub, Denver to Arvada), 160.455 (Moffat Sub, Arvada to Dotsero), 160.650 (Joint Line), 161.100 (Brush Sub), 161.160 (Front Range Sub); UP: 161.145 (Greeley Sub), 160.920 (Joint Line)

TO DO: Downtown Denver provides many activities. Check out a Rockies game at Coors Field, which is built on the site of a former UP yard.

NEARBY: The Colorado Railroad Museum in nearby Golden has 15 acres of Colorado railroad history on display. It is only 12 miles west of downtown Denver off I-70.

DIRECTIONS: Denver is at the crossroads of I-70 and I-25, with I-76 coming in from Nebraska.

Three Bridges



Thom Horvath

Located at MP 48 on NS's Lehigh Line is the hamlet of Three Bridges. This is a village with a name that dates back to the 1800s, when it was necessary to cross three bridges spanning the Raritan River's south branch in order to reach this settlement. Its rich railroading heritage can be traced back to the days of the Central Railroad of New Jersey (CNJ) and Lehigh Valley (LV). The CNJ's right-of-way remains in use today mainly by the Black River & Western to interchange freight on a regular basis with NS. Another sign of this location's railroading heritage can be seen at the Three Bridges grade crossing. Off to the right of the grade crossing is the Lehigh Valley station, which is now a private residence.

ACTIVITY: NS runs an estimated 20–30 trains on a regular basis, which are generally intermodal, auto racks, ethanol, or trash. NS 18G and 19G are general merchandise freights and NS H76 is a local freight that interchanges cars along this stretch of the line three times a week. CP's 38Z and 39Z operate between Bethlehem, Pa., and Oak Island thrice weekly. This train arrives in Oak Island in the morning and heads west to Bethlehem the same day.

TRAIN-WATCHING SPOTS: A gravel parking area adjacent to Three Bridge's Main Street grade crossing is a good spot to watch for trains. Regarding photography, the best illumination for eastbound trains is generally late morning. As the day progresses, westbounds receive sufficient sunlight. Winter snows should not be a deterrent in coming here. The plowed snow that piles up provides an elevated mound from which you can photograph trains.



Three Bridges is in the northwest part of the state about 5 miles east of Flemington.

SAFETY: Parking is near the tree line and away from the tracks.

RAILROAD FREQUENCIES: NS: 161.070 (road); Black River & Western: 161.085

TO DO: The Flemington area has numerous hotels, restaurants, and outlet stores to visit while railfanning at Three Bridges.

NEARBY: In Flemington, the Black River & Western offers weekend train excursions to Ringoes. Northlandz is also nearby and bills itself as the World's Largest Model Railroad.

DIRECTIONS: From Route 202, turn onto Railroad Avenue. Then turn right on Main Street and follow it to the grade crossing. The gravel parking area is on the left as you drive over the grade crossing.

Saunders Junction



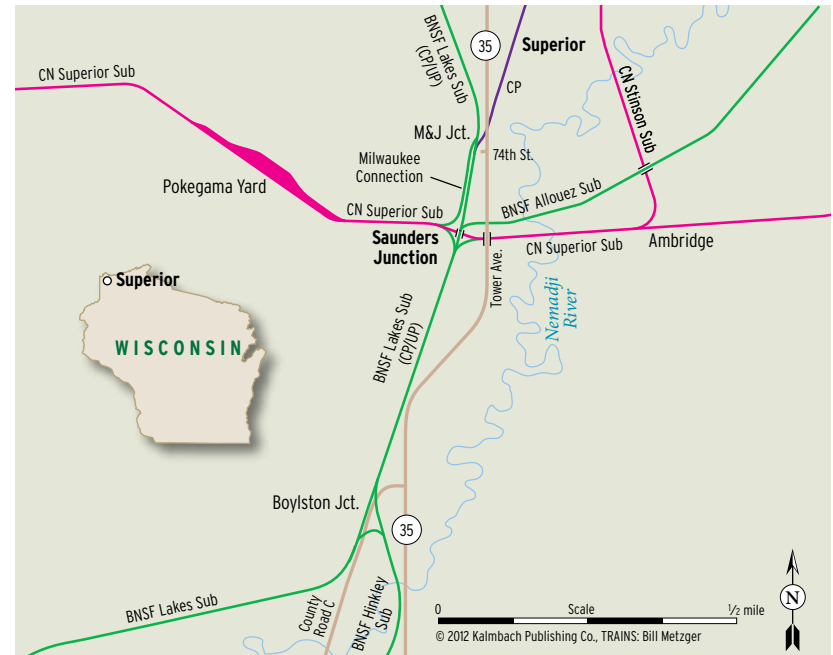
Steve Glischinski

Saunders is the junction of BNSF's Lakes Subdivision line from Superior and its Allouez Subdivision from the railroad's taconite facility in Superior. Passing under and connecting to the junction is CN's ex-Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Superior Subdivision line that links CN's former Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific, Missabe, and Wisconsin Central lines. Canadian Pacific and Union Pacific have trackage rights on BNSF through the junction to reach BNSF's Hinckley Subdivision main line to the Twin Cities, which breaks off at Boylston, about 5 miles west of Saunders. At Saunders, UP freights swing off BNSF and use the CN to reach to South Itasca Yard. Just north of Saunders Junction is the former Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific Pokegama Yard.

ACTIVITY: On CN, you'll see approximately 20 trains per day, including transfers, through freights, and UP trains. BNSF's line sees about 25 trains daily, including CP and UP trackage-rights trains.

TRAIN-WATCHING SPOTS: Highway 35, just north of the junction, crosses over both the CN and BNSF's Allouez Line and offers excellent photo opportunities. Just north of Highway 35, the CN and the Allouez Line cross the Nemadji River on large bridges that are a short walk from Highway 35. To get closer views of BNSF trains, head south on Highway 35 about a mile where the road and railroad run parallel.

RAILROAD FREQUENCIES: BNSF: 161.100 (road), 161.250 (Superior Yard), 160.605 (Duluth trackage); CN: 161.295 (road south), 160.860 (road north), 160.350 (ex-DM&IR Duluth to Iron Range), 161.415 (Pokegama Yard), 160.230 (Proctor Yard), 161.280 (Duluth Ore Dock); CP: 161.520 (Superior Yard), 160.770 (Duluth Yard); UP: 161.175 (Itasca Yard)



Saunders Junction is just south of Superior in the northwest corner of Wisconsin.

TO DO: In Superior, the Richard I. Bong World War II Heritage Center (305 Harbor View Parkway) includes a restored P-38 Lightning. Stop by the aerial lift bridge in Duluth's Canal Park and watch shipping activity at the Twin Ports for the journey across the Great Lakes. Adjacent to the bridge is the Lake Superior Marine Museum and Army Corps of Engineers Maritime Visitor Center. Admission is free.

NEARBY: The Lake Superior Railroad Museum in Duluth (506 West Michigan Street) has one of the finest collections of railroad equipment in the country. Most of the museum's exhibit space is enclosed at Duluth's restored Union Depot complex. The museum focuses on railroading in the Lake Superior region and features a giant DM&IR Yellowstone Mallet. During the summer, the North Shore Scenic Railroad operates excursion trains out of the museum along Lake Superior's North Shore to Two Harbors. Another tourist line, the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad, offers 6-mile rides out of Duluth on weekends from June to October.

DIRECTIONS: From I-35 in Duluth, follow the US 2 Exit. Cross the Richard I. Bong Bridge over the St. Louis River into Wisconsin and follow the signs for Highway 35. Saunders Junction is 5 miles south of downtown Superior on Highway 35.