

PHOTOGRAPHING THE SHINKANSEN: OKAYAMA

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So far this series of articles has concentrated on photo locations which are easily accessible by public transport and by foot. While the locations in this article can be done by using buses or local trains, I would not recommend it. Instead, hire a car. This is not difficult and, assuming the car has – as most rent-a-cars do – satellite navigation, finding your way around is relatively straight forward. There are two reasons I would recommend using a car. First, it will be much quicker to get to the locations, some of which will require quite a trek if you do take public transport. Second, if you do it in Summer, as I did, you will welcome the relief a car's air-conditioning can bring. As mentioned in an earlier article, the frequency of trains along the Sanyo Shinkansen is not as great at the Tokaido Shinkansen, but there is a much greater variation in rolling stock. East of Okayama, there are even quite a lot trains. Being still relatively close to Okayama, it is also quite easy to predict when a train will be coming by looking at the timetable for the departure/arrival time at Okayama.

To get to the sites you will be taking the National Route 2 (written in triangular sign) east from Okayama. It is easy to see when you have got to the right area as you will cross over a river and then have a sharp left bend before getting to a very iconic building with its red roof. At this point, look for a small access road down to park by the river.



Photo from Point A on the map – a 4-car 100 series crosses the Yoshiigawa.

Once you have finished at this point, get back in the car and go back towards Okayama. Take the first right hand turn after crossing the bridge. This takes you on to prefectural route 252 (in a hexagonal sign) north from National Route 2. Point B is a short distance up here on the right hand side.



Point B – a 300 series shinkansen crossing the Yoshiigawa

You can then walk from that point along a dirt track to the other side of the shinkansen line to get pictures looking South also (Point C).



Point C – a 700 series Hikari Rail Star crossing the Yoshiigawa. Note the red-roofed building on the left.

Having finished in this area, get back in the car and head back to National Route 2. Turn right towards Okayama. Take the next turning on the right. This is prefectural route 221 (in a hexagonal sign) north from National Route 2 going to Seto. If it's a hot day, I suggest you try to find a place to park under the shinkansen line itself in the shade. You will see a small factory on the north side of the line on the right hand side of the road. If you walk up the bank between the shinkansen line and the factory you can get a great view of the line. It was quite overgrown with weeds when I went, so wear something comfortable and not shorts! There are also a few rusty steps in places. Something to watch out for is the movement on the leaves just as a train enters and exits the tunnel which you are standing by. After a while you may even be able to start predicting what series of shinkansen is about to exit next to you based on the sound made and amount of movement there is from the leaves. Although it is possible to climb up and get a picture by the other tunnel (again on the north side of the line), the angle is not so great and other than some pictures of a maintenance vehicle, I did not find it worth the effort (which was considerable in the 40 degree heat!).



Point D – a 100 series shinkansen in its renewal design shortly after exiting a tunnel in Seto, Okayama



Map based on <http://www.its-mo.com/z.htm?m=E134.5.57.505N34.43.1.34&l=7>



Before returning the car, if you have time, you could drive by the maintenance facilities west of Okayama station – easy to find on the satellite navigator. There's not a whole lot to see, but sometimes it is possible to get a relatively good close-up shot of a shinkansen from a lower angle than usual.

Happy photographing!

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