

Dava Way northern section – from Forres to Dunphail

Distance: 8 miles (13 km)

The Dava Way trail leaves Forres at Mannachie Avenue where there is a set of steps and an access ramp.

For help finding the start download the Forres streetmap and instructions.

This well used section of path takes you across farmland to Dallas Dhu Distillery. This is no longer a working distillery, but is operated by Historic Scotland as a visitor attraction. It is open all year round and sells a genuinely rare and excellent malt, popular with collectors. Why not go in and enjoy a tour and a sample?

Continuing on you cross over the Mosset Burn and through woodland to cross the Rafford road. Ahead is the highest and longest embankment section of the whole Grantown to Forres railway line with views to the left of Rafford village and its church with Blervie Castle on the hillside above it. At the end of the embankment you are directed off the line to the left to join a pleasant woodland track that runs mostly parallel to and above the line. At this point the line itself enters a deep cutting that is now badly flooded.

After about ½ mile (1 km) you join a Forestry track. Follow this to the right rising gently uphill. At the top keep veering to the right and you will find yourself dropping down again to join the line at Squirrel Neuk Bridge. Cross the bridge, the steps down to the line are on the left.

Once on the line you almost immediately pass under another bridge, the Scurrypool Bridge. Railway engineers built many beautiful stone bridges, and this bridge hidden behind the trees in the middle of nowhere is included in that number. The burn on your right is the Altyre Burn and a short distance ahead you cross it. The bridge across the burn was originally made of iron and was removed when the railway line was closed. The flow of water in the burn varies considerably and is often impossible to cross without the risk of a swim.

For several years this seemed an almost insurmountable barrier until the local engineering firm AJ Engineering, in Forres, generously designed built and installed the present structure. The bridging of this burn was in a symbolic and real way the transformation of the idea of re-opening the old railway line from a hope into reality.

The track continues through the wood, joining and turning into a Forestry track through a cutting before emerging onto the Half Davoch road. Here there is good parking for several cars. Ahead of you lies Cowgreens wood. Crossing the road follow the left track (avoiding the logging area) to regain the line. Crossing the burn ahead it is amazing to realise that this wee thing, in 1997, washed away a whole section of embankment nearby which we had to rebuild. A gate at the edge of the wood brings you out into the lush farmland of Logie Estate.

The going is easy along this section of track. To your right is the spectacular wooded gorge of the River Findhorn. The Sluie Walks and Randolph's Leap both provide easy access points to Scotland's finest river. Also on your right is Logie Steading, a small collection of art, book and craft businesses with an excellent cafe - Treats at Logie. The easiest access is to leave the line where it passes under Peathillock Bridge, follow the

track through the farmyard (take care) to the main road. Cross over, go through the East Lodge gate and follow the track down to the Steadings, visible below left.

The Dava Way itself continues on through cuttings to reach Dunphail. Passing under the Half Davoch road, the sidings area for Dunphail Station is on your right. About 100 yards ahead the trail takes a short detour through the woods on the left. This avoids the old Dunphail Station and platform which are now a private house and garden. To continue to Dava or Grantown follow the detour to the left. To finish your trip here follow the path to the right which leads back to join the minor road. We hope to form a car park here but in the meantime a car can be left at Edinkillie Hall (Turn left on the minor road, and left again on the main road, about 200 yards total.)

Enjoy your day

Know the Code before you go ... Enjoy Scotland's outdoors - responsibly!

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to :

- take responsibility for your own actions;
- respect the interests of other people;
- care for the environment.

Find out more by visiting <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/default.asp> or phoning your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.

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