

Dava Way northern section – from Forres to Dunphail

Distance: 8 miles (13 km)

This section takes you from the coastal farmland of the Moray Firth up to the edge of the moorland scenery that characterises Dava Moor.

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

The path leaves Forres at Mannachie Avenue where an easy access ramp takes you down to the old railway track. This well used section of the path has been resurfaced and makes for easy walking or cycling out to Dallas Dhu Distillery. Dallas Dhu closed in 1983 and re-opened in 1988 as a 'living nuseum' visitor attraction run by Historic Scotland. 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?



A family day out

A slightly rougher but still good track leads on through the farmland that surrounds Forres. As the path crosses over the Mosset Burn it enters some woodland. The route out of Forres rises steadily in a sweeping curve, forming an embankment where it crosses over the minor road from Rafford. The embankment ahead is the highest and longest embankment section of the whole Grantown to Forres railway line. To your left you can see Rafford village and its church, with Blervie Castle visible on the hillside above it. At the end of the embankment the old railway line enters a deep cutting that is now badly flooded. There is an intersection of paths at this point which is about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile (3 km) from the start.

Follow the way markers on the section ahead. The Dava Way turns sharp left followed by a right to join an undulating woodland track that runs mostly parallel to, but above the cutting. Tree roots and stones make this path rough in places. Walkers and cyclists will face some short steep hills that many find to be a pleasant variation to the normal railway path. In just over $\frac{1}{2}$ mile (1 km) you join a wide Forestry track. Turn right and follow this, rising gently uphill. At the top way markers direct you to the right to join a track that drops down again to rejoin the railway line at Squirrel Neuk Bridge. Turn right at the bridge crossroads and cross the bridge. Take the steps on the left down onto the line. Almost immediately you pass under another ornate bridge that also spans the Altyre burn, this is Scurrypool Bridge. Railway engineers built many beautiful stone bridges in the middle of nowhere, and this bridge hidden behind the trees is included in that number. If the midges permit this can be a pleasant spot for a picnic.

The path continues with the Altyre Burn on the right, then cross over the burn on a new bridge. The original bridge across the burn was made of iron and was removed when the railway line was closed in 1965. The flow of water in the burn varies considerably and for several years crossing it seemed an almost insurmountable barrier to the opening of the path. Local engineering firm AJ Engineering, in Forres, generously designed, built and installed the present structure as a gift to the local people. Bridging the burn was a symbolic moment transforming of the idea of re-opening the old railway line from a hope into reality. The path continues through Clasdhu Wood, joining and turning into a Forestry track that passes through a cutting before emerging onto the Half Davoch road. Here there is good parking for several cars. You are now almost 5 miles (8 km) from Forres.



The new bridge over the Altyre Burn

Go over the road and follow the left track (avoiding the logging area) then curve right to regain the line through Cowgreens wood. You could easily miss the small burn that passes under the track a short way ahead. It is hard to comprehend that this burn, in 1997, washed away the entire section of embankment at this point which had to be rebuilt. 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 but there are many gates. Numerous interesting breeds of cattle graze at time along this section. To your right beyond the fields is the spectacular wooded gorge of the River Findhorn. The River Findhorn is prone to flash flooding and significant changes in water level. It is popular with water sport

enthusiasts and is regarded by many as Scotland's most spectacular river. The Sluie Walks and Randolph's Leap both provide easy access points to the river and are well worth a visit.



Farmland beyond Cowgreens Wood

Also on your right is Logie Steading. This is a small collection of art, book and craft businesses with a truly excellent cafe Treats at Logie. About 6½ miles (10 km) from Forres the path passes under Peathillock Bridge (the first bridge over the line that you come to). You can access Logie Steading from here with a detour of 1 mile (1½ km) each way. Take the track to the right just before the bridge and follow the track through the farmyard (take care) to the main A940 road. Cross over to the

B9007 Carrbridge road, but take the track ahead right to go through the East Lodge gate. Follow the track down to the Steadings, visible below left. Reverse this route to rejoin the path. The Dava Way itself continues on through various cuttings that are always wet and muddy - boots are advised.

Passing under the bridge that carries the Half Davoch road you reach the sidings area for the former Dunphail Station and the end of this section. This area was replanted in 2009 under the Breathing Places programme and has a small network of paths and a pond. There is a car park and picnic area with vehicle access from the A940 beside Edinkillie Community Hall. The path on to Dava and Grantown takes a short detour through the woods on the left to avoid the old Dunphail Station and platform which are now a private house and garden.



Looking towards Logie and the wooded Findhorn gorge

Enjoy your day

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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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