

Dava Way southern section – traveling from Dava to Grantown

Distance: 8 miles (13 km)

Join the trail at Dava. On the Grantown side of the snowplough shed and Highland Council boundary, a track leaves the eastern side of main road. There is no official parking but it is possible to leave 1 or 2 cars off the road on the grass verge opposite the track. Please do not take cars up the track; it is the private driveway for the residents at Dava.

A few yards down the track a wooden footbridge joins from the left, this is the trail from Forres. Continue along the track, following it round to the right to join the railway line in about 400 yards. The old station is visible from the track but is now a private house. Go through the gate and head out onto the moor. 1 mile (1.5 km) ahead of you is a small copse, which marks the highest point on the line at about 320 m (1050 feet). Craig Tiribeg, on your right, is the highest hill on this section of moor. At 486 metres (1595 feet) its western flanks drop steeply down to Lochindorb (Gaelic: loch of tadpoles or loch of troubles – depending which source you believe) with its ruined castle on an island

I hope you enjoy fine weather here for Dava moor can be bleak but wonderful place with plenty of wildlife to keep you entertained. Watch out for the buzzards, lapwings, fallow deer, etc. In poor weather it can be a fearsome place. On more than one occasion trains were stranded up here in winter snowdrifts. Be sure to look behind you as you stride out onto the moor. In the far distance to the northwest is Ben Wyvis in Easter Ross, 40 miles (64 km) away. On a clear day you can see Ben More Assynt in Sutherland 61 miles (97 km) away.

Continuing on the trail, you will see the road comes back to run beside the line and the descent into the Spey Valley ahead begins. Is it coincidence that the only visible signs of farming here are on the relatively sheltered eastern slopes of the hills to your right? Enjoy the section ahead that is a blaze of colour in early summer from the broom and groundcover plants. In maintaining a way through this we are keen to retain the splendid flora that has colonised the track.

Soon you will enter a damp cutting. Notice the flat 'meadow' to the left where cattle herders rested their beasts before crossing the moor behind you.

Emerging from the cutting look out for a path crossing the line with a clear track down to you left. This is a path worn by rock climbers visiting Huntly's Cave crag, which is about 200 yards on your left. There are stories of various inhabitants of Castle Grant fleeing here in the 14th and 17th centuries to hide. It is worth a short detour for the views of the gorge and/or a picnic. The Allt an Fhithich burn descends this pleasant wooded gorge on its way to join the River Spey.

The trail emerges from the woodland to cross some fields before heading through Lynmore Wood. About 500 yards into the wood a way marker directs off the track to your right. Ahead the line passes through several wet cuttings. The path through the woods brings you out onto a minor road. Here you turn right and enjoy elevated views across to the Hills of Cromdale on the left and to the Cairngorm Mountains in the distance. Bynack More is the pyramid mountain on the left and Braeriach is to the right.

Where you join the main road there is a path marked off to the left that avoids walking on the main road for about 400 yards. Cyclists will find it easier to follow the main road for that distance, turning left onto the second track on your left. Follow the track for about 100

yards, and then turn right down the edge of the woods to rejoin the railway line. Just ahead you cross the road on a splendid bridge and railway halt, once known as Lady Catherine's Halt. This impressive grade A listed building was built to allow the lords and ladies from nearby Castle Grant to board and alight from the trains.

Ahead enjoy the contrast of the farmland with the moorland you left behind. On your left there are again views across to the Cromdale Hills. If you look carefully you can make out the top turrets of Castle Grant (near the centre of the photo to the left).

The trail crosses the minor road to Lynmacgregor Croft before passing through a much walked wooded cutting. There are kissing gates at either end of this section which cyclists can avoid by joining the main road on the left to enter Grantown. Straight ahead you emerge from the cutting you find yourself on an elevated section with fine open views across Grantown on the left. Watch out for the way marker that directs you off the line on the right, down a ramp and through a kissing gate to Dulicht Bridge. For those with plenty of energy left this point is also the start of the local Viewpoint Walk – an easy circular walk offering views of the Cairngorm Mountains – allow about 1½ hours. For those in need of a tearoom, head down the road under the bridge to Grantown-on-Spey.

Enjoy your day

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