

Dava Way southern section – traveling from Grantown to Dava

Distance: 8 miles (13 km)

Join the railway line at Dulicht Bridge, a few hundred yards past the caravan park and just ½ mile from the Square in Grantown-on-Spey. This is also the start of the local Viewpoint Walk – an easy circular walk offering views of the Cairngorm Mountains – allow about 1½ hours.

Go through the kissing gate and up the ramp to join the old railway line. The elevated track soon enters a pleasant tree lined cutting with a good well-used path underfoot and then through another kissing gate before crossing a track. (Cyclists may prefer to avoid the kissing gates on this initial section by cycling out of Grantown along the main road to Forres. As you leave Grantown and pass the lodge on your right there is a track on the left up to the trail.) You then pass by some old crofts with open views to the right towards 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 route crosses the road at 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. About 100 yards beyond the bridge the recommended route leaves the line by a ramp to the left. This diversion avoids a waterlogged cutting and other obstructions. Follow the path by the edge of the woods to a lane, turn left towards the main road, then right by the old gateway to follow a short section of a few hundred yards that meanders by the road side until it joins a minor road. (Cyclists may well prefer to join the main road for this short section turning right at the junction ahead by the telephone box.)

Follow this quiet road for about ¼ mile. To the south you can see the Cairngorms with Braeriach to the right and Bynach More (Pyramid shape) to the left. Turn left through a gate into the woods. You soon rejoin the railway line as it leaves this wooded section and passes through the last of the farmland on its climb up to Dava Moor. On your right is the Allt an Fhithich burn, which falls from Dava Moor through a pleasant wooded gorge. A few hundred yards after re-entering the woodland ahead the line is crossed by a well worn path. Rock climbers use this path to visit Huntly's Cave crag, which is about 200 yards to the right. 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.

Beyond Huntly's Cave the line passes through a damp cutting. Look out for the flat 'meadow' to the right where cattle herders rested their beasts before crossing the moor ahead. As you approach the end of the climb up from Grantown (which required trains to be pulled by two engines), you emerge onto Dava Moor. This can be both a beautiful and desolate place.

The entry to the moor 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 which has colonised the track. You pass a gate and access track on your left, which could be used to break this walk into two shorter sections if you wished.

At 486 metres (1595 feet) Craig Tiribeg, ahead and to your left, is the highest point on this section of moor. 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. Is it coincidence that the only visible signs of farming here are on the relatively sheltered eastern slopes of the hills? The gradient has eased now and as you head for the summit of the line watch out for the buzzards, lapwings, fallow deer, etc.

The highest point on the railway line is approx 320 metres (1050 feet) and lies in the shallow cutting through the second copse of trees. Ahead of you is the tiny settlement of Dava. One of the few houses here was once an old school, and several residents have lived on these moors for generations. 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.

The railway buildings at Dava, including the station, are now private properties and it is necessary to leave the line here and follow a track back towards the main road. There is no official parking here but it is possible to park one or two cars on the flat grass verge opposite the track entrance. Please do not bring cars up the track that is the private driveway for the residents at Dava.

For those continuing their walk on another occasion a wooden footbridge leaves the track near the road to head back up to the railway line at the far side of the houses. Those with cycles are asked to use the main road (turn right) for about 300 yards to rejoin the line via a short access track.

Enjoy your day

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