

Dava Way

Notes on multi-use access

The Dava Way is a 24 mile (38km) waymarked long distance route based largely on the dismantled Highland Railway Line between Forres, near the Moray Coast in north-east Scotland, and Grantown on Spey in the Cairngorms National Park. The scenery along the route is stunning. Sheltered woodland and forest either end contrast dramatically with sections of wild heather moorland and an impressive viaduct over the Divie Valley in the middle. The Dava Way links at its northern end via a promoted cycle route to the Moray Coastal Trail, and at its southern end with the Speyside Way, creating the Moray Way.

Although originally developed and now promoted primarily for walkers and cyclists, nearly all of the Dava Way is accessible on horseback. Over the last few years the Dava Way Association has invested considerable resources upgrading the route and installing on-site interpretation of the fascinating history of the former railway line and the countryside through which it passes. Stiles and difficult gates have been replaced with self-closing bridlegates and 2-in-1 gates with easy latches, or where possible removed altogether to leave a gap.



Some sections are stony underfoot but generally the route is good going and other than where identified below, suitable for multi-use.



These notes have been produced by British Horse Society Scotland to help horse riders and others identify the location and brief details of sections of the Dava Way which may not be suitable for multi-use. The notes are intended to supplement route descriptions and other information already available from www.davaway.org.uk and other sources. The Dava Way Companion, a detailed guidebook, can be purchased locally. Although the route is waymarked throughout and easy to follow; it is still worth having a map with you.

The background information for these notes was provided by volunteers who surveyed the route in 2014 as part of a multi-use long distance route audit funded by Scottish Natural Heritage. The Dava Way Association will endeavour to update these notes as improvements are made, but cannot guarantee accessibility or the accuracy of information provided. All route users are responsible for deciding for themselves whether this route, or sections of it, is suitable for their intended use, taking account of their own abilities, skills, fitness and experience, as well as season, weather conditions etc. Event organisers, groups or commercial operators considering using the Dava Way are urged to contact the route managers.

Remember that whether on foot, cycle or horseback, rights of access in Scotland depend on access takers and land managers accepting individual responsibility for their actions. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/> offers guidance on what this means on the ground. Specific guidance for horse riders can be downloaded from <http://www.bhsscotland.org.uk/responsible-riding.html>. Courtesy, consideration of others' needs and good communication are the key to sharing paths. Always pass others you meet along the trail at a walk, and elsewhere limit your pace to ground conditions and visibility. On surfaced paths and other well used sections of the route, such as along the disused railway, riders need to be particularly careful to respect other users and clear up dung.

Parking: The Dava Way can be accessed from many points but there are no dedicated parking areas for horse riders. Dallas Dhu Distillery has a large car park but please ask permission. There are also car parks at Newtyle Gravel Pit and Edinkillie Hall.

Circular and alternative routes

An alternative route avoiding the Divie Viaduct, and other sections of route identified by local riders which offer circular routes can be found at <https://meag2010.wordpress.com/where-to-ride/>.

Sections which may present issues for multi-use (from the South)

Dulicht Bridge

A series of shallow steps lead up from the road onto the disused railway, which are easily passable with a horse. Ignore the "Pedestrians Only" sign on the fence which relates only to the narrow path which branches off the Dava Way leading up to the viewpoint.



Dava

At Dava the waymarked route deviates west for a short way off the dismantled railway. The path signed through the trees is very soft and unsuitable for cyclists or horses, who should follow the signed alternative route, continuing north on the main track to the A940, turning right towards Forres, then following the sign up the next track to the right to rejoin the railway.

Divie Viaduct

The stone parapets either side of the Divie Viaduct are relatively low, but there is ample width for horses to ride (or drive) up the middle. If in doubt, get off and lead your horse!



Altyre Woods

At OSGR NJ041532 in Altyre Woods the waymarked Dava Way crosses a narrow metal footbridge which is impassable with a horse. The ford shortly downstream can be tricky to negotiate because of steep banks either side of the burn. Horse riders are therefore recommended to detour west via Clashdhu, leaving the dismantled railway at OSGR NJ032523, following the clearly defined track through Altyre Woods and rejoining the Dava Way at OSGR NJ043536.

Updated by Vyv Wood Gee - June 2018

Updated by Scottish Natural Heritage - January 2019