

Kempton Park

Location, Parking and Access

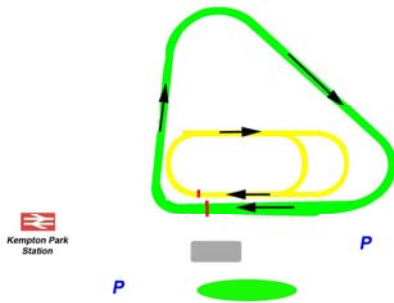


Set in suburban London near to Sunbury-on-Thames access can be a nightmare, especially during the rush hour or if there are any major events at nearby Hampton Court. It is located on the A308 between Sunbury and Hampton Court and is only about ½ mile from J1 of the M3.

There are two car parks, one on tarmac with a £5 charge at some meetings, the other more rustic but free.

Kempton Park has its own railway station and is 40 minutes from London Waterloo with a 30 minute service.

Course Layout



Kempton has recently undergone a major change with the flat track being converted to all weather (polytrack), jump racing also takes place at the course.

The jump course is triangular in shape and is 1 mile 5 furlongs round. The all weather track, which is inside the turf track consists of two circuits, the outer loop being 10 furlongs and the inner 8. All courses are right handed (clockwise). The jumps course favours speedy front runners as the turns can be tight and there is a short run-in

Admission

Flat racing January - March inclusive £12

Flat racing April - September inclusive £15

Jump racing excluding Racing Post Chase and Christmas Festival £18

Racing Post Chase £20

Boxing Day Premier £45 (£55 with a seat), Paddock £30 and Family Enclosure £15

Annual membership: Flat £199, Jump £165

Dress code is relaxed with only ripped denim, sports shorts and vests being no-no's

Discounts: Seniors Students Group

Overview

The two main enclosures share a common grandstand, with the only real difference being that the Premier enclosure has a grass frontage, whereas the paddock enclosures is tarmac. Both enclosures have seating.

Viewing is reasonably good, although the bend out of the home straight of the turf course is not visible from the seats or the rear of the tiered viewing, however there is a big screen to compensate.

The stands are a fair way back from the track which is bad enough on the turf course, however with the all weather course well inside the turf track, racegoers are a long way from the action, even if they stand by the rails.

Facilities inside the stands are excellent and the Premier enclosure has a balcony overlooking the parade ring.



Kempton is a rarity in that it has a modern stand which still caters for the 'normal' racegoer as a priority, rather than the corporate box holder first and the ordinary racegoer as an afterthought.

Kempton used to be one of my favourite courses, note I use the term "used to be", I'll return to that theme later.

Being less than a mile from the M3 Kempton is relatively easy to get to, although approaching or leaving from the Hampton Court direction can sometimes be a nightmare.

There also used to be a great atmosphere at the course, nowadays the good atmosphere is confined to just a handful of meetings, invariably national hunt.

So what has gone wrong? The answer is simple Kempton has gone "all weather" at least for its flat racing. Granted the quality of the all weather racing is generally better than the other all weather tracks.

The trouble is, all too often, too few people actually turn up to watch it. So the atmosphere at the all weather meetings is often, excuse the pun, flat to say the least.

The trouble is I don't know what Kempton can do to attract better crowds to the all weather meetings. When they have tried promotions and themed evenings (although a Caribbean evening mid-October does have a hint of desperation), more people have turned up but have spent time in the bars and not watching the racing. From Kempton's point of view that's probably OK because they are getting more money through the bars, however it does nothing to improve the atmosphere.

The saving grace for Kempton is its jump racing, sadly it's the one saving grace at the moment. Take the November Jump meeting, a midweek meeting however the crowds were much larger than regularly attend the all weather racing. There was also a far better atmosphere, indeed there actually was an atmosphere.

I really do hope Kempton sort out the issues with the all weather, it has the potential to, once again, be a great course.

Catering

The Jewel of the culinary crown at Kempton has to be the panoramic restaurant and it is, undoubtedly, the place to enjoy good food and watch the racing. At the big meetings it can be expensive (up to £100 a head) but for the quieter all weather meetings the charge of £35 is most reasonable.

The main eating area in the Grandstand itself resembles the food outlets found at most major shopping centres, consisting of fast food outlets with a central seating area. Fish and chips £5.75, Fishcake and chips £5.75, Chicken and chips £5.75. Burgers £3.80 and hot dogs £4. Sandwiches from £3.10 and the noodle bar for £5.00.

The seafood restaurant in the Premier enclosure is popular and invariably crowded. Potted Shrimps £8.95, Smoked Salmon £9.95, Dressed Crab £12.95, Clam Chowder £5.75 and Seafood Platter £29.95 (for two)

Outside the feature eating areas the food is basic and designed for the masses, indeed the one criticism is there is no "middle ground" in terms of food. It's either top notch or fast.

In the main bars both bitter was £3.50 and lager £3.60, whilst water was £1.60 a bottle.

What was refreshing to see was a real ale bar offering a selection of real ales at affordable prices.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

At the larger meetings it is not uncommon to find more than 30 bookmakers standing. Whereas at a mid-winter AW meeting you will be lucky to find seven.

Racecard

Another variable feature ranging from one of the best available full of interesting editorial and costing £2.50. On the other hand at some all weather meetings they have taken the folded A3 broadsheet route, a la Sedgefield. However unlike Sedgefield where it is free, Kempton charge £1.

Toilets

Plenty of large toilets, more than enough at most meetings, although on King George days there are the inevitable queues.

Parade Ring

A medium sized oval paddock, containing the winners enclosure. The paddock has an intimate feel and is located behind the main stands.

Racegoers in the Premier enclosure have a balcony overlooking the paddock providing excellent viewing.

Just outside of the paddock is a statue of Kempton hero Desert Orchid and his ashes are buried nearby.

Commentary & PA

Kempton has started to follow the lead of the likes of Haydock and Chester by having a CCTV program broadcast over the PA. In theory something to be admired.

The only thing they need to watch is who they have presenting it. I will avoid naming and shaming but at a recent AW meeting the presenters spent more time trying to be a comedy double act that they lost any credibility as pundits when looking at the racing.

Non Racing Attractions

Being close to London there are plenty of attractions. For those who like some excitement in their life Thorpe Park is not too far away.

Hampton Court is nearby.

Contact Details

	www.kempton.co.uk
	01932 782292
	Kempton Park Racecourse Staines Road East Sunbury on Thames Middlesex TW16 5AQ

Ownership	Jockey Club
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Fixtures 2010

All flat meetings are evening meetings unless followed by an (A)
All jump meetings are afternoon meetings unless followed by an (E)

Jump

March 6th & 23rd
April 9th & 19th (E)
October 17th
November 1st & 22nd
December 26th & 27th (King George Meeting)

Flat

March 3rd 17th, 24th, 25th, 27th (A) & 31st
April 3rd (A), 7th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 20th (A), 21st & 28th
May 3rd
June 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th
July 7th, 14th & 20th
August 4th, 13th, 16th (A), 17th, 23rd (A) & 24th
September 1st, 3th, 4th (A), 8th, 9th, 11th, 15th, 20th (A), 22nd, 27th (A) 29th & 30th
October 6th, 11th (A), 13th, 14th, 20th, 21st, 23rd, 25th (A) & 27th
November 2nd (A), 3rd, 4th, 10th, 17th, 24th, 27th (A) & 28th (A)
December 1st, 8th, 9th, 15th, 16th, 19th (A), 22nd, 29th & 30th

Inspection Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
13/01/07	Overcast with some drizzle	7 Jump weekend
17/10/07	Cool and cloudy	7 AW evening
13/11/07	Cloudy with some showers later	7 jump midweek
25/06/08	Sunny	7 AW evening
23/03/09	Variable sunshine and heavy showers	7 jump midweek
12/02/10	Variable sunshine with a cold wind	7 jump midweek