

# Ascot

## Location, Parking and Access



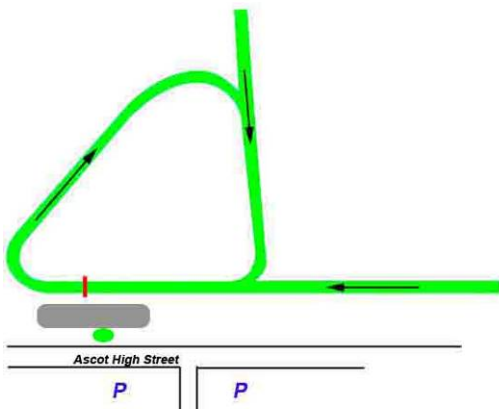
Located to the south west of London, Ascot is in easy reach of the motorway network situated between the M3 and M4 motorways. The course is well signposted from all the major approach routes with additional signage on race days. Even if you know the area well it is still advisable to follow the signposts, even if the route doesn't appear to be immediately logical .... the routes are designed to ensure optimum traffic flow. On premier race days it's advisable to aim to arrive at the racecourse two hours before the first race.

There are numerous car parks, some free, others charging between £5 and £7, pre booking is advisable. However some of the car parks are a significant walk from the racecourse so check with the racecourse when booking to find out the precise location of your allocated car park, especially if travelling with people who cannot walk too far. There is a disabled car park located across the road from the main entrance and this can be booked in advance.

At the Royal meeting reserved car parking is available for £15.

If arriving by public transport Ascot station is a 7 minute walk from the racecourse entrance. It is served by regular trains from London Waterloo (52 mins), Reading (27 mins) and Guildford (59 mins), all routes having a half hourly service.

## Course Layout



The "round" course is actually triangular in shape, with a chute hosting races up to a mile in length, although just to confuse matters some one mile races are run on the round course. The round course is about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles long. Jump races take place exclusively on the round course, which is right handed (clockwise). The straight course is uphill nearly all the way, whilst the round course is basically downhill to the furthest point from where there is a steadily uphill rise to the finish. As part of the major redevelopment work at the course the track was re-aligned and re-laid. One significant change has been to the drainage. This means, in the winter, the course is

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not as demanding as it once was. However there have been some concerns expressed regarding uneven going with pronounced differences in different parts of the track.

The turn into the home straight has also been made more sweeping and this seems to be favouring front runners.

There is no discernable draw advantage.

The course is considered to be galloping in nature.

### **Admission**

Ascot generally operates a two or three enclosure policy, depending on the meeting.

The price guide for general meetings is as follows: -

Premier Enclosure £22 - £45

General Enclosure £12 - £26

Silver Ring £7

For the late April meeting, General admission is free and Premier admission will be £12

For the Royal Meeting things change. The Premier enclosure becomes the Royal Enclosure and unless you have the right contacts the only way you will be able to gain access to this inner sanctum will be to purchase a hospitality package and for that you are talking upwards of £900 a head.

For the General Enclosure advance admission prices are £49 (Tue and Wed), £69 (Thu), £63 (Fri and Sat)

For the General Enclosure on the day prices are £59 (Tue and Wed), £69 (Thu - Sat)

For the Silver Ring advance admission prices are £17 (Tue and Wed), £29 (Thu), £22 (Fri) and £24 (Sat)

For the Silver Ring on the day prices are £19 (Tue and Wed), £29 (Thu - Sat)

Annual membership £320 (excludes Royal meeting)

There is a dress code at Ascot, obviously the Royal Enclosure has a very strict code, however that shouldn't concern the average racegoer. The General Enclosure dress regulations at the Royal meeting states:

### **Ladies**

Ladies within the main Grandstand enclosure are encouraged to dress in a manner as befits a formal occasion.

Ladies are kindly asked to take particular note of the following:

- A hat, headpiece or fascinator should be worn at all times;
- Strapless or sheer strap dresses and tops are not permitted;
- Trousers must be full length and worn with a top that adheres to the guidelines above (i.e. strapless or sheer strap tops are not permitted);
- Jackets and pashminas may be worn but dresses and tops underneath should still comply with the Grandstand Admission dress code;
- Midriiffs must be covered;
- Shorts are not permitted.

### Gentlemen

Gentlemen are required to wear a suit with a shirt and tie.

In **Premier Admission** on other racedays Gentlemen should wear a jacket and tie, smart trousers or smart jeans, no trainers. There will be an announcement on the day allowing jackets to be removed, should the weather be hot. Ladies should dress for a smart occasion; hats are encouraged but not compulsory. Children should be dressed smartly. There is no dress code for the general enclosure, however bare chests are not allowed.

**Discounts: Seniors**  **Disabled**  **Group**

### Overview

Ascot have spent over £200m developing a new racetrack which they hope will be world class and as the new Grandstand is approached it certainly makes you draw breath ... it looks stunning.

If you enter the course from Ascot High Street one of the first things you see is the new parade ring which has to be one of the best in the world and by this point ones pulse is racing in expectation.

For all its idiosyncrasies the old Ascot racecourse had a lovely, almost homely feel to it. It wasn't perfect and the route march to the summer parade ring could be tiresome. However the old grandstand provided excellent viewing with copious amounts of seating.

Despite its external flamboyance the new grandstand may be slightly disappointing. The first thing to note when looking at it from the front is, for all its size, most of the frontage is dedicated to hospitality boxes with little space left for 'normal' racegoers.

Once inside the disappointment is even greater, for all its grand size, inside is largely an empty void, which means when full of people space can at a premium and the crowds on the days of the reviews are a lot smaller than would be encountered at the Royal meeting. Granted it is a stunning atrium and were this a hotel or airport terminal it would be

wholly appropriate, however for a racecourse it can be sometimes seem impractical.

Level 4 is dedicated to those frequenting the Premier Enclosure, sadly a significant part of Level 4 is a void which means racegoers are squeezed into relatively narrow walkways. At the "quieter" meeting this isn't too much of an issue, however at the big meetings there can be a claustrophobic feel.

There is a reasonable amount of seating on this level and it has to be said the seating provides the best race viewing that will be encountered at any racecourse in Britain. Serious racegoers are presented with a dilemma as logistically it is a near impossibility on busy days to view the horses in the paddock, place a bet then make ones way to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor to view the race, something has to give ... but it shouldn't have to.



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The Royal meeting is something else and the crowds can be huge, especially on the Thursday (Ladies Day) and the Saturday. If you don't like huge crowds then I would strongly like going on one the "quieter" days.



The General enclosure at the Royal Meeting almost equates to the Premier enclosure on other days. There is a strict dress code.

For a more relaxed (and cheaper) option then the Silver Ring is the place to be. You can still dress up if you want to and although not compulsory most do. OK you are located a long way from the finishing line and you cannot access the parade ring but there is a good party atmosphere. The only caution is if the weather is adverse then shelter is limited.

Ascot has also begun to exploit themed meetings including a Beer Festival, Food Festival and Christmas Market. These attract new racegoers and with the size of the site do not impinge on the racing. On top of that even racing fans can get some brilliant bargains – especially at the Food Festival.

There has been much written in the press about customer feedback on the new Ascot, I approached the visit with an open mind but I have to admit after my first visit I came away generally agreeing with most of the comments that have been made, however on subsequent visits it is pleasing to see the Ascot Executive have taken onboard the feedback and they spent an additional £10m to alleviate the worse of the problems and viewing from the ground level is now good.

In hindsight it was inevitable that a project the size of that undertaken by Ascot would not be without problems and it is to Ascots credit these problems have not just been swept under the carpet.

Ascot is not by any means the cheapest racecourse to attend, however as a special day out it is worth a visit.

Ascot's aim with the redevelopment was to have a world class racecourse, the start was a bit shaky but, in the tone of Ascot ... "by jove I think they have achieved it."

### **Best Viewing Position**

For Premier Ticket holders then the Level 4 seating arguably offers the best racing viewing in the United Kingdom, with the whole course visible.

For those watching at ground level, the new terracing greatly improves the viewing experience, although certain parts of the course will be obstructed by the big screens. It goes without saying the higher up the terracing you are the better the potential view – subject to any giants standing in front of you.

### **Catering**

As would be expected catering at Ascot is a cut above the rest. Equally unexpectedly such catering comes at a price.

There are a large number of restaurants at Ascot if you are looking for a formal dining experience, however not all of them offer views of the racing. Prices range from £29.50 for a two course meal in the Ascot Grill. If you want a table for the afternoon then packages start from £82.25 per person (£190 plus VAT at the Royal Meeting, and that is very much a "from" price).

Even the ubiquitous beef burger has received a makeover and is branded as the "Ascot Burger" for which you will be charged £9.00 (although this is served as a "meal"), for £8.50 there is a chicken breast in a roll meal or for £8.00 a sausage meal.

There is also the Bandstand Restaurant (Self Service) Fish & Chips £8.50, All Day Breakfast £6.50 or £9.00, "Global Foods" from £7.50 and "traditional favourites" from £8.50. There are seafood platters for £14.50. Afternoon tea is available from £11.50

A new franchise is a pie stall with a selection of pies for £3.50. There are also a number of Pizza Express outlets with pizza available for £6.30 through to £8.50

Elsewhere there are many outlets selling ranges of sandwiches but if you are looking for a cheese and pickle Mothers Pride sandwich you will be out of luck as Italian rolls seem more the norm, priced around £4 each.

For beer drinkers prices are slightly higher than average with lager and bitter both at £4.20.

## **Ancillaries**

### ***Bookmakers***

There are always a large number of bookmakers standing at Ascot resulting in strong books.

### ***Racecard***

Racecards vary in price and are usually either £2.50 or £3.00. For the non-Royal meeting the cards are informative and contain editorial as well as all the usual information.

In keeping with the tone of the meeting the cards at the Royal meeting are more restrained. The style has not changed in years and concentration is on provision of race information. The cards are also a discrete size, presumably to easily fit in ladies handbags.

### ***Toilets***

As would be expected in a brand new facility the toilets are modern and clean although it is questionable if there were sufficient. At the August meeting there certainly seemed to be permanent queues outside the ladies lavatories as the afternoon progressed.

### ***Parade Ring***



It has to be said the parade ring is one of the best features of the new Ascot. With excellent tiered viewing round most of the ring there is an amphitheatre feel to it and it adds to the pre-race anticipation. The large parade ring allows good close up viewing of the runners. Indeed on the day of the first inspection, Shergar Cup Day, when all races had a maximum of 10 runners the parade ring almost seemed too large with the runners looking lost in such a vast space.

A balcony allows viewing from Level 4 of the Grandstand.

On leaving the parade ring the runners actually pass through a walkway under the grandstand, a la Longchamp style, certainly adding to the sense of occasion and providing racegoers in the Premier Enclosure a good view of the horses as they go onto the track.

Arguably this is one of the best parade rings in the world and is something Ascot should justifiably be proud of.

## Non Racing Attractions

Ascot town doesn't have too much to visit, however travel a few miles down the road and you are in Windsor with all its Royal attractions.

If you have children then the delights of Legoland await you all.

## Contact Details

	<a href="http://www.ascot.co.uk">www.ascot.co.uk</a>
	08707 227 227
	Ascot Racecourse Ascot Berkshire SL5 7JX

<b>Ownership</b>	The Queen
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## Fixtures 2012

### *Jumps*

January 21<sup>st</sup>

February 18<sup>th</sup>

April 1<sup>st</sup>

November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>

December 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>

### *Flat*

May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>

June 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> (Royal Ascot)

July 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>

August 11<sup>th</sup>

September 8<sup>th</sup>

October 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>

October 20<sup>th</sup> (British Champions Day)

## Inspection Dates

<b>Date</b>	<b>Weather</b>	<b>Type</b>
12/08/06	Showery	6 Flat weekend
31/03/07	Sunny but blustery with a cold wind	6 Jump weekend
21/12/07	Dry with a bitter wind	6 Jump midweek
30/04/08	Wet	6 Flat midweek
21/06/08	Overcast with sunny periods and showers	6 flat Royal meeting
23/11/07	Sunny spells but a chilly wind	7 Jump weekend
11/07/09	Overcast with drizzle	7 flat weekend

18/04/10	Sunny and warm	7 Jump weekend
09/07/10	Hot and sunny	6 flat midweek
06/05/11	Warm and sunny	6 flat evening
21/01/12	Overcast and blustery	7 jump weekend

