

Ayr

Location, Parking and Access

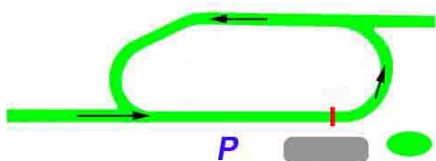


The racecourse is 1¼ miles from the town centre and is well signposted.

Parking is free and is on a combination of gravel and grass.

Ayr station is just over a mile from the course and a pleasant walk if the weather is fine, if not there is a bus from the station to the course. Alternatively you should find little trouble getting somebody to share cab from the station. Prestwick airport is less than 4 miles from the course with Ryanair having several daily flights into the airport from Bournemouth, Derry, Dublin and London.

Course Layout



Ayr is an oval track with chutes on both the home and back straights. Races up to 6 furlongs are run on the straight track. The track is about 1½ miles round and is generally level. It is a left handed (anti-clockwise) track. The jump track is inside the flat track. Ayr is considered a fair course with only a few gentle undulations and the long four furlong run-in allows for some exciting finishes with strong galloping types favoured.

Draw bias: when the going is soft or heavy then a low draw can be an advantage in sprint races with large fields.

Admission

Ayr has quite a complex pricing structure.

At some meetings it is possible to have "value" admission for £7 (£15 club). Other meetings have a single enclosure £15.

Most other meetings have a dual enclosure with Grandstand £15 / £16 or Club £21 / £24.

Some premier fixtures are more expensive. Most notably Ladies Day £22 single enclosure, Saints and Sinners night £23 single enclosure.

For the Scottish National meeting it is £16 Friday, £19 Saturday or £30 two day for Grandstand or £26, £40, £57 respectively for Club.

For the Gold Cup meeting Grandstand is £15 (Thu), £16 (Fri) and £19 (Sat), whilst Club is £23 (Thu), £26 (Fri) and £40 (Sat)
Annual membership: Club £260, Grandstand Full £170, Jumps £75, Flat £112 (Reductions available for seniors)

Dress code for Club is smart casual with no jeans or trainers.

Discounts: Seniors **Age 16 - 24** **Group**

Overview

One of the advantages of doing these racecourse reviews is one regularly visits all the courses and has a chance to see them develop.

When I wrote the initial review of this course in 2007 I have to be honest and say it was not the most positive review I have written.

The course was very disappointing with an almost ramshackle feel to it.

Since that visit the course management have invested £4.5m in refurbishing the main grandstand and I was looking forward to seeing the end result on the opening day of the new facilities.

The Club enclosure consists of the Princess Royal Stand which has previously been extensively refurbished internally, with the front of the stand being on two levels. The lower level is split between uncovered tiered viewing and covered seated viewing. The upper level is the roof viewing terrace which is tiered and under cover.

Whereas viewing from the roof is excellent, viewing from the seating is appalling. This is due entirely to thoughtless racegoers who stand in front of the seating area and along the gangways, thus totally obscuring the views of those who are seated. An almost complete lack of stewarding in the stand does little to help.

The main enclosure consists of the Eglinton stand, a stand that has seen better days, more of that later. There is a tiered viewing area, mostly under cover, offering excellent viewing. There is an uncovered roof terrace offering good tiered viewing.

There are large concrete areas in front of the stands, viewing from these areas is adequate but nothing special.

The Longfellow poem "There Was a Little Girl" contains the immortal lines "When she was good she was very good indeed, but when she was bad she was horrid."

The same can easily be said of Ayr racecourse.

Let us begin with the good. The quality of racing can be very good. Viewing is excellent from both the stands, apart the seating area in Club. The catering is good, arguably the best value at any racecourse in the country. The staff are generally welcoming.

As we have Ying and Yang so we have the bad with the good. The comment I made in 2007 was "Quite frankly the infrastructure is a disgrace."

Now I can say the infrastructure has greatly improved, although there are still areas that need to be looked at. Having said that I have no doubts these will be addressed in future.

The internal area of the main grandstand has basically been gutted and rebuilt.

The finished article is airy, bright and spacious. The course have also taken the imaginative step of moving away from large bars to smaller bar areas, with barriers to control the inevitable queuing and plenty of space away from the bars themselves for people to have their drinks.

The course should be pleased with the result of their expenditure and I am sure the racegoers will appreciate it more.

As I did say however, there are still some areas that need to be addressed. The external appearance of the stands is still on the tatty side.

The stands are old and they do show their age externally.

The Princess Royal stand, for example, has been fully refurbished inside. It looks good until you go to the roof, which is accessed by what can best be described as a service staircase. When you reach the roof it is tatty, although its redeeming factor is the excellent viewing of the racing that it offers.

When in the seating area of the Princess Royal stand I ventured to look up at the stand to be faced with areas of the building where large chunks of concrete were missing and the paint was peeling badly.

Granted the "issues" are more cosmetic than anything else, but a good lick of paint can go a long way to improving the image.

What makes the lack of a lick of paint seem so perverse is the course is fastidiously clean when it comes to litter. Anyone who has ever been to a Disney Theme park will know that any item of litter that may be dropped will almost invariably be picked up within seconds of hitting the ground. Ayr seem to have adopted a similar practice, with a veritable army of cleaning staff picking up litter – I even saw them scanning the grass for single cigarette butts.

In defence of the racecourse it used to be effectively a private members

club. In the 1990's it was recognised a substantial re-investment was required. In 2002 a consortium finally purchased the course with plans to improve the infrastructure.

This work is progressing well and at the current rate of progress I can easily see Ayr, justifiably, taking its place as one of the top courses in the country.

Ayr is a good course and well worth a visit, something I would not have said a year ago.

Best Viewing Position



The upper, roof, levels of either of the grandstands offers excellent viewing of the entire course, as well as the upper tier of the Eglinton stand.

Catering

An area where Ayr excels, arguably offering the best across the board range, and at very competitive prices, than any other course in the UK.

The Chancellor Carvery in the Princess Royal Stand is the main restaurant, offering viewing of the course. Packages vary from £80 - £215 + VAT a head depending on the meeting.

For Club badge holders the Champagne and Seafood bar near the parade ring offers a range of seafood. With a smoked fish platter for £10, salads £7.50 and sandwiches £3.95 - £4.95. Also available for Club badge holders is the Colours Café, offering bar type main courses for £3.90 - £5.50 as well as a selection of sandwiches.

The Eglinton restaurant is at the rear of the stand, offering views of the road outside of the course but nothing of the course itself. It has the look and feel of a Blackpool hotel restaurant that has seen better days. Having said that the prices were reasonable with soup of the day for £1.95 and a range of main courses at £5.95 each and a dessert for £2.75. I settled for a meal here, the quality was good and the food nice and hot and with a very friendly waitress service it is to be recommended, what a shame you can't see any racing from there. There are also less formal dining units in both stands, also offering a dish of the day for £5.95. Sandwiches were also available for £1.95 through to £2.50.

There was a mobile unit selling burgers and fries, with or without cheese, for £5.50 and hot dogs for the same price. A second mobile unit was selling tea and coffee with a range of cakes.

A soup and baguette tent had cups of soup for £1.50 and baguettes for £3.50.

Bitter and lager were priced at £3.20 and water was £1.70 a bottle.

The food on offer catered for nearly all tastes and was exceptionally good value.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

A reasonable number of bookmakers standing although a few had given up and gone home before the last race. Despite there being a reasonable number of bookmakers they are far from generous with three of the seven races having an over round of over 2% a runner, one of them 2.5%.

Racecard

Well Ayr have excelled themselves here, not only is the racecard free it is actually very good quality and better than many a card for which one is asked to pay £2.50 at other courses.

Instead of the usual boring introduction letter the card begins with some controversial editorial - a much more interesting start. There then follows a plan of the facilities, followed by a guide to how to read the racecard and betting. Then it was straight into the racecards. The cards for Ayr were clear and concise and were interspersed by full colour cards for the main "away" meeting in the correct place chronologically.

The one minor gripe is some of the other pages appeared in the wrong place sequentially, for example the catering information was situated between races one and two. The trackfacts and tipping information was at the end of the racecard, surely better located at the front.

Toilets

There are plenty of toilets, however most of them are quite small. They were adequate for the meeting in question, although how they would cope at a large meeting is a matter of conjecture.

Parade Ring

A large, attractive, oval parade ring situated at the far end of the stands. The ring is probably situated in the most attractive part of the course.

The winners enclosure is located at one end of the parade ring.

The pre-parade ring is at the far end of the parade ring and looks to be out of the way, however there are signs showing the route. Once there you can get really close to the equine stars.

Commentary and PA

An area where there has been some improvement, although there are still areas where the sound quality is poor.




There were a number of interviews broadcast over the PA system throughout the afternoon.

Non Racing Attractions

Ayr itself is an attractive town but has little to hold the attention of the tourist for too long. There are some pretty parks and the river is nice to stroll along.

Being on the coast there are some nice attractive beaches in striking distance and being Scotland there are plenty of golf courses nearby notably Old Prestwick and, open courses Royal Troon and Turnberry.

Contact Details

	www.ayr-racecourse.co.uk
	01292 264179
	Ayr Racecourse 2-6 Whittleys Road Ayr KA8 0JE

Ownership	Private
------------------	---------

Fixtures 2012

Jump:

January 2nd , 3rd , 17th & 30th
February 14th
March 9th & 10th
April 20th & 21st (Grand National Meeting)
November 3rd

Flat:

May 30th & 31st
June 22nd (eve) & 23rd
July 8th, 9th , 16th , 23rd & 30th
August 11th (eve) & 14th
September 20th , 21st & 22nd (Western Meeting)
October 2nd & 11th

Inspection Dates		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
22/06/07	Sunny	7 flat midweek
18/04/08	Mainly sunny but with a cool wind	7 jump midweek
18/04/09	Hot and sunny	8 jump weekend festival
27/05/10	Sunshine and showers	7 flat midweek

