

Bath

Location, Parking and Access



Located 3 miles north of the city centre the course is close to the A46 / A420 junction, which links Bath with J18 of the M4. If possible it is best to approach from the M4 as taking the A4 route will bring you in close proximity to the city centre and tourist traffic.

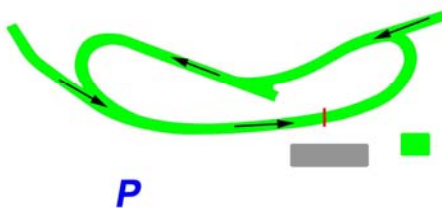
The last couple of miles to the course is via country lanes and they can become congested, especially after racing.

Parking is exclusively on grass and it has to be said, despite there being plenty of stewards in the car park, the actual parking can sometimes be quite haphazard. During the first inspection I actually ended up in a car parking cul-de-sac due to the inconsistent way cars had been allowed to park.

The nearest railway station is Bath, 3 miles from the course. Transfer to the racecourse is then by taxi or the No 22 bus which runs half hourly from Dorchester St in the city centre. (Fare £3 single, £6 return)

Exit from the course is not easy with only one exit from the car parks and, as previously mentioned, the congestion on the local access roads can be bad. As a guide, travelling to the M4, it takes between 9 and 15 minutes to get out of the course, between 20 and 25 minutes to reach the A420 and around half an hour to reach the M4.

Course Layout



Bath is a kidney shaped circuit of 1½ miles with a spur for 5 and 5¾ furlong races. The sprint course and the finishing straight is uphill most of the way.

The course is considered tricky and it is advisable to look out for course specialists. Even five furlong sprints involve a turn and coupled with the undulations the course takes some getting.

In terms of horses galloping types are favoured and because the course requires good tactical skill from the jockeys it pays to side with riders who have a good record on the track.

Draw advantage: it used to be thought that a low draw was an advantage in sprints, however results over recent years no longer bear this out.

Admission

Bath has three enclosures. Premier (£20 - £22), Grandstand and Paddock (£15 - £22) and the course enclosure (£10 - £12). The course enclosure is only open for evening and weekend meetings.

Annual membership: Single £130, Double £320

Dress Code: The dress code policy in the Premier Enclosure is 'Smart-Casual' – this means no jog bottoms, casual shorts (tailored shorts are acceptable) football/rugby shirts, skimpy tops, or trainers. Smart jeans are acceptable. Having said that it doesn't seem to be rigorously enforced. (2011 prices)

Discounts: Seniors Disabled Group

Overview

Regular readers of my reviews and my musings will know I am not the greatest fan of courses whose sole aim is to pack 'em in and pour booze down their throats. Sadly this was my experience when I first inspected Bath in June 2007. I was incredibly disappointed during that visit, especially as previous experiences of Bath had all been pleasant and enjoyable. I have been twice more since, both midweek, and the experience was more enjoyable. However for balance I will report on all findings in this review.

In the late 80's early 90's I used to live in Cardiff, consequently Bath was a relatively 'local' track for me and I was a frequent visitor. My memories were of standing on the roof of the old members stand, next to the commentary box, which was nothing more than a garden shed perched on the roof, with fantastic views of the racing. Of course times change and Bath now has new stands (and commentary box), although part of the old stand still remains, access to the old roof is restricted to the TV crews.



The premier enclosure has a block housing corporate boxes with a main stand set back slightly. This stand has tiered viewing at the lower level, with a seating level and behind that some additional standing areas. For races up to a mile the stand is perfectly adequate.

However there is a design flaw with it being set back. From most of the stand it is not possible to see the first two furlongs of the extended 1 mile 3 furlong races and for 1 mile 5 furlong races the runners disappear from view behind the corporate boxes as they take the turn out of the home straight. Also you lose sight of the runners as soon as they past the post.

Viewing from the terrace in front of the old stand is slightly better but you then have the disadvantage of being at a lower level.



The stand in the main enclosure actually offers better viewing. The majority of the stand is tiered viewing, however the upper level also has seating, unusual for many courses. From this stand it is possible to see the entire course. The disadvantage being you are a good half furlong from the finishing line so close finishes will be lost on you, especially as there are no big screens at Bath. I have to say in this day and age I fail to see why courses do not provide big screens as a matter of routine, especially where courses have 'blind spots' in their main stands.

Both enclosures have grassed areas in front, although viewing from ground level is not brilliant.

The course enclosure is situated in the centre of the course and is generally an open grassed area, with a single building providing shelter / bar / café / Tote facilities.

One advantage of the configuration at Bath is that the kidney shape of the course means the "far side" of the course is very close to the stands, indeed probably the closest of any course in the country, offering good viewing when the far side is used.

My advice – visit Bath and have a good days racing but try and avoid the busy weekend meetings where it can become uncomfortable. To the course – may I respectfully suggest imposing some realistic crowd size limits on your more popular days.

Best Viewing Position



For races up to a mile the premier enclosure stand offers excellent viewing however, as mentioned above, for longer races the view of the track is obscured by the integrity buildings.

The upper levels of the main stand offers excellent viewing of the entire track with the only drawback being it is situated someway short of the finishing line.

Catering

Silks restaurant is the main eatery, however access is via the very crowded Premier bar. Access is an issue, as viewing from the restaurant itself isn't that good, so you would need to pass through the bar to get to the stands. A package is available for £65 a head (including admission)

Hoops Bistro, situated behind the stands, has no viewing of the racing and has a package for £55 a person including admission.

There is a café on the first floor of the main grandstand, although "viewing" is to the rear of the enclosures. This offers a range of reasonable meals for £6.95 or £12.00 for two, which is an enterprising offer. Options including Bangers and Mash, Roast of the day, Steak pie or chicken and bacon casserole. Also available was pizza ranging from £2.10 to £2.60 a slice. The food was good quality. Jacket Potatoes were available from £4.50, plus extra for toppings, pies were available for £2 (£3.50 with chips)

The remaining eating options were the ubiquitous fast food units, with all the usual suspects ranging from burgers through to fish and chips. There were all reasonably priced though. With burgers at £4.00 (£4.50 with cheese), hot dogs and bacon rolls both £4.00. Pork baguettes £5.50, fish and chips £5.20, sausage and chips £4.50.

However the main focus was on booze. It was abundantly clear at the weekend fixture that most racegoers were not at the course to enjoy the days racing but to pour as much booze down their throats as possible and it was equally clear the course would do all they could to oblige them.

Bitter is £3.40 a pint and lager £3.50.

Water was priced between £1.30 and £1.50 a bottle.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

At the weekend meeting there were a large number of bookmakers standing. This number reduced at the midweek meeting with the most obvious difference being in the course enclosure where there were ten bookmakers at the weekend as opposed to a lone one at the midweek meeting.

The over round was a not unreasonable 1.59% per runner

Racecard

Bath charge £3 for their racecards, which is on a par with the price you would pay at a festival meeting at a major course. The cost would not be too bad if there was something special about the card, unfortunately there is nothing special about the card at all. It is a bog standard racecard with plenty of advertising and no editorial content. Compared with what is on offer elsewhere it provides no value for money at all.

Toilets

For standard meetings the number of toilets is adequate and they are generally clean and well maintained. For the busy weekend meeting they were wholly inadequate with queues which would not have been out of place at Cheltenham.

Parade Ring

Apart from a bed of shrubbery in the centre of the parade ring it is a generally bland but functional parade ring. It is located at the far end of the main stands and also contains the winners enclosure. There are some button style seats but no tiered viewing.

The pre-parade ring is adjacent.

Commentary and PA



A bit like the curates egg – good in places. In fairness in most of the course the PA is clear, however in areas of the Premier stand it is inaudible and it was impossible to follow the commentary. On more than one occasion I had to relay the result of the race to those standing near to me.

There were some post race interviews at the fourth meeting reviewed.

Non Racing Attractions

The Georgian splendour of Bath is only 3 miles away and slightly further afield there is Bristol for the shopping and maritime history fans. Also within easy reach are the caves at Cheddar and Wookey.

Contact Details

	www.bath-racecourse.co.uk
	01225 424 609
	Bath Racecourse Lansdown Bath BA1 9BU

Ownership	Northern Racing
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Fixtures 2012

April 4th (eve)
May 7th & 16th (eve)
June 8th (eve) , 16th & 27th (eve)
July 19th (eve) & 26th
August 3rd (eve), 7th, 14th & 23rd
September 1st (eve), 5th, 10th, 15th & 16th
October 1st & 21st

Inspection Dates

Date	Weather	Type
16/06/07	Changeable rain with some sunshine	7 weekend
10/09/07	Sunny and warm	7 midweek
19/05/08	Slightly overcast with a cool breeze	7 midweek
03/04/09	Misty, clearing to a sunny afternoon	6 midweek
05/08/10	Broken cloud, cool bey late evening	7 midweek evening
03/05/11	Sunny with a brisk breeze	6 midweek