

The Curragh

Location, Parking and Access



Situated 50km (30 miles) from Dublin via the N7 / M7, the course is a five minute drive from Junction 10.

The nearest station is Kildare, from where a shuttle bus service operates. On classic race days there is a special station in operation, located 500m from the entrance to the course.

A special bus service operates from Dublin on racedays.

Parking is plentiful with both free public and paid reserved parking available. Public parking is generally on grass whilst the reserved is generally on cinder and closer to the course entrance.

Course Layout



The Curragh's configuration has much in common with France's biggest course, Longchamp, in that it has a number of courses on the one site. I'm not sure if jockeys are equipped with a GPS when they first ride there.

Basically the course is a right-handed horseshoe shaped with a circuit of two miles with no sharp bends and an uphill run in of three. There are two round courses plate and Derby.

In addition there is a dog-leg spur upon which races of up to a mile take place.

Admission

Admission to the non-festival meetings is €15.

For the Classic and Group One days admission is €20.

Day Member admission is €30.

Derby Day admission €20 - €40

Annual membership: standard €175 , premier €320 to €395

Discounts are available for seniors and families and accompanied under 15's are admitted free. (No concessions or free admission available on Derby Day) *(2011 prices)*

Overview

One of the first things you notice when you arrive at the Curragh is a sign informing you the course is twinned with Newmarket. This should be no surprise as both courses have so much in common.

Both are the major training centres in their relevant countries. Both have a sweeping, expansive, heath setting. Both are their national flagship courses.

However there are some notable differences, whereas Newmarket can have a feeling of aloofness and "them and us" feel, there is no such feeling at The Curragh where everyone is made to feel equally welcome.

As you exit the impressive entrance hall you are immediately next to the pre-parade ring and already feeling close to the action.

Now before we go any further with this review it needs to be pointed that following a truncated 2009 season the course will effectively be razed to the ground and then rebuilt to re-open in 2011. I was tempted to say rise Phoenix like but following the demise of Phoenix Park that may not be the best analogy.



There are two large grandstands both of which can be described as "traditional" stands. By traditional I mean the dominant feature is large areas of steppings.

The steppings are gentle and provide no issues for those with stiff joints. Viewing is good and, bar some minor interference from pillars, the viewing is good. There may be some issues viewing the start of some long distance races on the horseshoe due to hospitality tents in the centre of the course.

The upper level of the main stand is set aside for the Reserved Enclosure. Viewing from this level is very good.

The area in front of the stands is a combination of hard standing and grass.

The areas inside the stands are large and spacious with plenty of shelter if the weather inclement, that said the external steppings are well covered and the only risk of getting wet comes if the wind blows the rain into the stands – which, with the openness of the surrounding area, is not an impossibility.

The day of the inspection was an end of season industry meeting as such the crowd numbers were low. The previous Sunday, by contract, had attracted a crowd of around 10,000 and looking at photographs of a busy meeting it can look to be crowded.

Unlike a number of major courses The Curragh is actually quite compact with all the facilities within easy reach, most notably there being a short walk from the parade ring to the viewing steppings.

The Curragh is a very likable course having a friendly atmosphere and a nice feel to it, too many large courses can be soulless, and even on a very quiet day crowd wide there was still a pleasant atmosphere. Add in the bonus of staging some very high class racing the course is well worth a visit.

It is hoped that after redevelopment the same atmosphere will prevail at the course. The new proposed stand is of a more modern design, four story grandstand. Certainly the traditional covered steppings will be disappearing.

Catering

Being a quiet meeting not all the catering facilities were open.

Currently the main restaurant is the Horseshoe Restaurant, where packages are available for €70 (standard days), €110 (Classic and Group days) and €125 or €160 (Derby Day). The proposed new grandstand has a stunning looking panoramic restaurant planned for the fourth floor.

For more informal dining there is a self service restaurant in the main stand. Sample prices are €4.25 for the soup of the day and a choice of five main courses ranging from €10.95 through to €14.50. The restaurant also offers a range of snacks and rolls.

A coffee kiosk in the same stand also offers authentic Thai cuisine.



For more “upmarket” casual dining there is a bistro near the main entrance specialising in seafood and champagne (this facility was not open on the day of the review)

In the West stand there are a number of fast food outlets, along with a number of sandwich and baguette outlets throughout the stands.

Needless to say there are plenty of bars to be found throughout the course

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

Typically a busy ring, even on a quiet day there were plenty of layers standing.

However despite the large number of layers they were not particularly generous, operating to an average over round of 1.93% a runner.

As is usually the case at major Irish courses there is a huge Tote presence with many manned counters and automated points.

Racecard

Costing €3 there was, pleasingly, not a great deal of advertising in the cards, however this may be due to the nature of the meeting.

Details of the races are clear although with some races having up to 30 runners the details of each race are spread over a number of pages.

Toilets

Plenty, once you find them. The main facilities are located under the main stand although for the uninitiated the entrance is not immediately obvious, or it could have just been me being stupid.

As is often the case there were more than sufficient for a quiet day, I have no doubts there would be queues at the more popular meetings.


Parade Ring



A pretty parade ring but, in truth, a bit on the small side when there are big fields. It is very well maintained with pretty flower beds and a gazebo used for presentations.

There are button seats along one side of the ring and some tiered viewing along the other.

Contact Details

	www.curragh.ie
	(045) 441 205
	Curragh Racecourse, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

Fixtures 2012

March 25th
April 22nd
May 26th & 27th
June 10th , 29th & 30th
July 1st , 21st & 22nd
August 12th , 25th & 26th
September 9th , 15th & 30th
October 14th

Inspection Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
30/09/08	Sun , mist and rain	8 flat midweek