

Doncaster

Location, Parking and Access



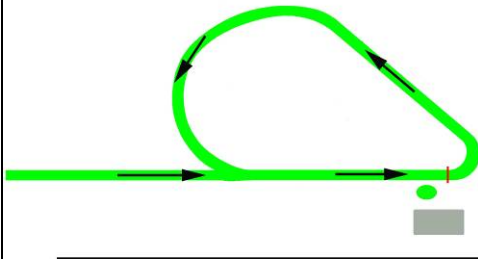
Located about two miles from the town centre the course is well signposted from the main approach routes being accessible from both the A1M and M18.

There are a number of parking options including, on certain racedays, a park and ride option. At the course itself there are a number of car parks some free and some charging. Car Park B charges £5 and is shared with the owners / trainers and officials – however it is an absolute pain to get out of so I would suggest thinking twice before forking out the fiver.

As a result of its proximity to the town centre the traffic can get a tad chunky around chucking out time, so factor that into your calculations if you have plans after racing.

The course is about two miles from the station which is served by frequent services from many destinations and is on the London – Edinburgh main line with journey times of 1¾ and 3 hours respectively. A shuttle bus operates from the adjacent bus station, additionally several service busses run from the bus station past the course. Robin Hood airport is about seven miles from the course.

Course Layout



The main course is a left handed (anti-clockwise) oval just under 2 miles in length. Apart from some minor undulations at the exit of the back straight the course is relatively flat. The home straight has an extension allowing for races up to 1 mile to be run on a straight course.

P | **P** Apart from the turn out of the home straight, which only comes into play in races longer than two miles, the long sweeping turns on the course are very gentle indeed.

The configuration of the track strongly favours long striding, galloping types

Draw Advantage: High drawn runners can have an advantage on the straight course.

Admission

There are four enclosures at Doncaster. The Premier Suite, restricted to around 300 racegoers, costs between £22 and £75, is situated on the third floor of the grandstand. The County Enclosure (formerly members) utilises the first and second floors of the Grandstand and charges between £20 and £50. The Grandstand enclosure charges between £12 and £30. The Family Enclosure, situated near the furlong pole charges between £6 and £12. For National Hunt meetings there is a combined enclosure £12 - £15

Annual membership: £375 single £715 dual and £110 junior (age 20 or under)

The Premier Suite has a jacket and tie dress code for gentlemen, whilst the County Enclosure operates a "smart casual" policy.

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

Overview

I sometimes wonder if I have some blue blood coursing through my veins as, like the Prince of Wales, I am no great fan of modern architecture (although I will make an exception for the fabulous Swiss Re building, better known as the Gherkin). So it was with some trepidation that I set off to Doncaster to look at the brand new £32m Grandstand. Even more so after the experiences of Ascot's redevelopment.

My worries soon to be proved to be generally unfounded as this racecourse redevelopment, unlike many others, has considered the "normal" punter and has not completely pandered to the corporate customer. It doesn't mean all is perfect but seeking perfection is always an impossible aim.

Doncaster races throughout the year with a combination of flat and jump racing. Doncaster is more renown for its flat racing and in particular The Lincoln which is held in March and, more importantly, the final Classic of the season, The St Leger, run in September.

The main course is a left handed (anti-clockwise) pear shape just under 2 miles in length. Apart for some minor undulations at the exit of the back straight the course is relatively flat. The home straight has an extension allowing for races up to 1 mile to be run on a straight course.

In terms of the enclosures, let us take each of the enclosures in turn and beginning with the Premier Suite. For a £10 - £12 premium on the County Enclosure admission this occupies an area on the third floor of the main grandstand. The initial view is that you aren't getting much for the extra money. You have use of a bar in an area shared with the Lincoln restaurant. However there are two pluses. Firstly the number of badges for the suite is restricted to no more than 300, so on busy days it is a way to beat the crowds. (Advance booking is highly recommended, almost essential).



The other advantage is the terrace with seating offering the best viewing of racing in any of the public areas. Having said that the viewing is not perfect. Some marquees in the centre of the course will block the view of races like the St Leger from shortly after the start for about a furlong. A wooded copse obstructs viewing of about two furlongs coming out of the back straight. Viewing of the straight

course is relatively unobstructed although some trees block the view of the rail beyond 7f out. Access to the suite is strictly controlled with generally polite, helpful stewarding. (Although one of the stewards was a caricature gruff Yorkshireman who had been on the receiving end of a charisma by-pass). One thing the course may have to look at is the use of glasses for serving drinks and allowing them on the terrace. A few glasses ended up getting smashed, one narrowly missing me as it was knocked down the terrace.

The County Enclosure makes use of the first and second floors of the grandstand. Offering a mixture of seating and tiered viewing. There are spacious bars inside the stand. Viewing is not ideal with the combinations of marquees and trees in the centre of the course virtually rules out all viewing of racing on the round course. Viewing of the straight course is reasonable. The area in front of the stands is mainly hardstanding and viewing from ground level is not brilliant.

In the main enclosure there is an area of the main grandstand with the same configuration, and viewing restrictions, as the County enclosure. Internally the inside of the new stand is airy and spacious with plenty of bars and eating outlets.



There is a second stand, the old clock stand, a stand with plenty of history and atmosphere but, to be brutally frank, in terms of watching racing is as much use as a chocolate teapot. It is virtually impossible to see any of the straight course beyond the 5f pole and, again, viewing of the round course is restricted. The family enclosure has an older tiered stand which

is 50% under cover.

All in all Doncaster have done a good job with the building of the new stand and speaking to regulars at the course they are generally happy with the changes. Some annual members are not happy with their new facilities. Two big screens are provided to assist viewing.

The initial review of the was carried out on the first day of the St Leger festival where the crowds were not at their greatest, it will be interesting to see how it copes on Leger day itself.

At the second review, a jump meeting, without the marquees in the centre of the course the viewing problems were not as bad, however the trees still obstructed viewing of a fair amount of the course and as all jump races use the entire round course it is a not insignificant inconvenience.

Catering

Doncaster has a wide range of eating options. At the top end is the Lincoln restaurant on the third floor of the main grandstand with packages ranging from £120 - £155 depending on the day. Includes admission, champagne reception on arrival, four course meal and afternoon tea. The County Bistro, on the second floor, offers a three course meal option with a price range of £80 - £100.

Elsewhere the food court provides a decent range of eating options.

Examples are sandwiches £3.50 - £4.00. Sausage and mash or filled Yorkshire pudding for £5.95.

Jacket Potatoes £3.50, plus 50p per filling, except chilli which was £1. Various pies were on offer at £3.60 a go, with pie meal deals for a fiver.

Chicken or steak baps are available for £4.50 and bacon rolls for £3.50.

Pizza is available at £2.50 a slice.

During the second visit I attempted to eat a steak and onion bap. The first mouthful took some chewing and it was slightly perturbing it was the onions that were proving to be tougher to eat than the steak, and the steak was by no means tender.

It probably goes without saying that alcohol features strongly both with a large number of bars, bitter and Lager is £3.60.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

Plenty of bookmakers around the place resulting in a strong market. On the first day of the Leger festival there were 16 rails bookmakers, around 40 in the main enclosure and half a dozen in the family enclosure. Betting was to a reasonable over round of 1.43%

Racecard

A racecard with a good combination of information and editorial and only £2.50. Compared with many racecards well worth the money. The only minor gripe was the large amount of advertising with 19 of the 62 pages set aside for advertising.

Toilets

As would be expected in a new facility there are plenty of toilets and in good condition. Certainly sufficient for the day of the inspection, it remains to be seen how they cope on a really busy day.

Parade Ring






Clock Tower stand.

I am fast becoming a fan of parade rings situated in front of the stands and Doncaster is a course with a well located parade ring, situated in front of the main grandstand, offering excellent viewing of the parade ring from the main stand. For those at ground level there is tiered viewing, but no seating. A good size parade ring it also houses the winners enclosure. The pre-parade ring is situated behind the

Non Racing Attractions

Doncaster isn't a major tourist centre. There are a number of golf courses nearby. There are some nearby nature reserves. For shopping fans there is a reasonable centre in Doncaster but less than half an hour away is Sheffield's Meadowhall centre.

Contact Details

	www.doncaster-racecourse.co.uk
	01302 304200
	The Grandstand Leger way, Doncaster, DN2 6BB

Ownership	Arena Leisure
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Fixtures 2012

Jump

January 11th & 28th
February 9th & 22nd
March 2nd & 3rd
November 30th
December 15th & 29th

Flat:

March 31st
April 1st , 27th & 28th (eve)

May 5th (eve) & 19th (eve)
 June 8th (eve), 9th , 17th, 29th & 30th (eve)
 July 6th , 12th , 19th (eve) & 26th (eve)
 August 4th & 18th
 September 12th , 13th , 14th & 15th (St Leger Meeting)
 October 26th & 27th
 November 10th

Inspection Dates		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
12/09/07	Sunny and warm	7 flat festival
01/03/08	Overcast and cool	7 jump weekend
28/02/09	Overcast and cool	7 jump weekend
30/04/10	Initially sunny then showers	6 flat midweek
24/06/11	Broken cloud	7 flat midweek

