

Downpatrick

Location, Parking and Access



Situated 35km (22 miles) south of Belfast via the A2 and A7, or from Dublin via the N1 / M1.

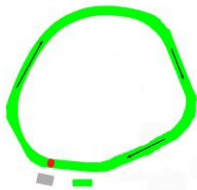
A word of warning however there is no local signposting to the course so it can be difficult to find.

Coming from the A7 drive into the town centre, follow the "Other Routes" signs. You will pass the St Patrick's centre on your right then an ASDA superstore. The racetrack is about another $\frac{3}{4}$ mile down the road on your left.

The nearest station is Lisburn, some 45 minutes from the track.

Parking is free and on grass.

Course Layout



Downpatrick is one of those courses which need to be seen to be believed as no verbal description can really do it justice.

The "official" description is an 11 furlong, undulating, tight right handed circuit.

The final furlong is a steep uphill climb and having negotiated that climb immediately after the winning post has to be one of the steepest downhill sections at any racecourse, anywhere.

The course is also very narrow.

Admission

Admission is £10 or €14.

Annual membership: £75, senior £50

Discounts are available for seniors and students (£5 / €7) and children are admitted free, although it is not altogether clear what the definition of a child is.

Overview

Once you manage to find the course the entrance is almost imposing with a big archway as you drive into the course.

When you approach the course itself the reality is slightly less impressive. The turnstiles are in a brick building but once you pass through the general appearance is somewhat ramshackle. Immediately to your left is a white painted brick building with about half a dozen service windows. The first houses the racecard vendor and the remainder are Tote windows. Look inside and it looks ad warm and inviting as a Victorian workhouse.



The main stand is relatively new and offers tiered viewing, accommodating up to 1,500 racegoers. Most of the stand is under cover and the upper level is dedicated to corporate boxes.

Inside the stand is a hall containing a bar, café and bookmakers.

Viewing of the course is reasonable, as far as the configuration will allow. The bottom of the uphill climb to the post is not visible and the downhill sweep after the post is only visible from parts of the stand.

The area where the course turns to the far side is also obstructed by a farm located in the centre of the course. There is no big screen, so a decent pair of binoculars is highly recommended.

There are a couple of low level buildings near the parade ring housing some bars.

On the day of the inspection the crowds were small and the facilities were able to cope with the numbers. Quite how they would cope with a large crowd I am not so sure.

Catering

I have to say very disappointing indeed. There is a café in the main stand offering a limited selection of fast food.

Burgers and hot dogs for £3, soup for £3 and stew for £3.50. Having said that the Irish stew did look to be very popular with racegoers. Sandwiches are also available for £3.

The only "mobile" facility was an ice cream van.

The bars looked to be popular with draught beers at £2.70

Ancillaries

Bookmakers



Typically a busy ring with seemingly almost as many layers as punters, seemingly doing a brisk trade. Betting was to an appalling average over round of 2.63% per runner (in one race the take out was 3.28%).

The high take-out may well have something to do with an almost non-existent Tote competition. Although being part of Horseracing Ireland Downpatrick does not have a Tote Ireland presence on-course. There is a locally operated Tote but with only five windows it seemingly did little business.

Racecard

Costing £2 the racecard was basic, providing sufficient information for racegoers.

There is no editorial content and very few advertisements.

Toilets

They were adequate to cope with the numbers on the afternoon of the inspection, however there is little doubt they would struggle should a decent crowd turn up.

Parade Ring



A basic and functional, rather than attractive, parade ring. There is no tiered viewing or seating, however with the numbers present at the meeting getting access to the ring was not a problem.

The ring is on the side of a hill and the horses who spend a long time in the ring will spend a great deal of time walking up and down the hill.

It is noticeable that the more canny trainers leave it as late as possible before bringing their runners into the ring.

Contact Details	
	www.downpatrickracecourse.co.uk
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Fixtures 2012
March 7th & 25th May 11th June 5th July 13th August 12th & 27th September 26th November 14th December 20th

Inspection Dates		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
05/11/08	Overcast and a cool wind	7 jump midweek