

Fontwell

Location, Parking and Access

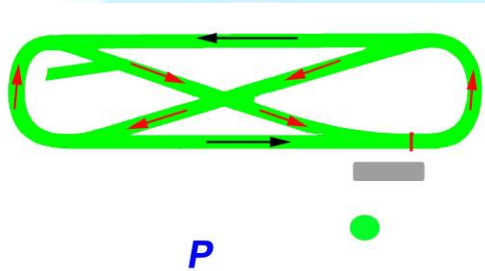


Adjacent to the junction of the A29 and A27 Fontwell is easily accessible by road from London, Brighton, Chichester, Portsmouth and Southampton.

Parking is free in the main car park or £5 in the centre of the course.

The nearest station is Barnham with regular services from London Victoria, Portsmouth, Brighton and Southampton. A shuttle bus operates from the station on race days. Arundle station, with more frequent services, is 3 miles from the course.

Course Layout



Staging only jump racing, the hurdle track is a simple left handed (anti-clockwise) oval of just over a mile in length. The chase course, however forms a figure of eight inside the hurdle circuit.

Because of its strange layout chase races tend to go to course specialists.

Some spectacular "up close" viewing can be achieved in the centre of the course.

Fontwell is not a good course for big long striding horses and the configuration can find out inexperienced runners.

Admission

Fontwell operate a dual enclosure policy with the Grandstand and Paddock enclosure (£17 – £21) and Premier enclosure (£22 - £27) – discounts are available for advance booking.

Discounts: Seniors Advanced

Overview

I must begin by laying my cards on the table and declaring that Fontwell does hold a certain place in my affections as it was the first racecourse I ever visited and was the course that fostered my subsequent passion for racing. Admittedly all those years ago my racing was confined to the Silver Ring and I only looked on at the 'better' enclosures in the same way a hungry tramp looks at diners in the Café Royal.

In August 2010 a new Premier Stand was opened and I must confess when the building of the new stand was announced I was concerned the unique character of the course would be forever lost, my fears proved to be groundless.



The new stand does feature a large amount of space for corporate boxes but it also includes a viewing restaurant.

The ground floor, the public area, has a spacious hall with bars and food outlets.

Outside there is some tiered viewing, plus a very welcome couple of rows of seating.

The area behind the stand is exceptional and it still retains its charm and character after completion of the new stand. First of all there are the best gardens to be found at any racecourse, certainly in this country and possibly anywhere in the world. Indeed the gardens could be opened in their own right. Within the gardens is a conservatory which serves as an owner and trainers area. If I owned a jump horse I would be inclined to enter it at Fontwell just to gain access to the facility. The centrepiece however is Fontwell House, now I am not going to show my ignorance of architectural styles by trying to describe it.



The Grandstand enclosure currently houses two main grandstands, both offering under cover tiered viewing. There is a third stand in what was the old silver ring and this offers good viewing of the final hurdle.

The centre of the course is accessible by all racegoers and it offers excellent, close up viewing of two of the jumps on the chase course indeed just by strolling about 50 yards backwards and forwards it is possible to see at least 5 jumps close hand.

Viewing is good, although there is some restricted viewing of the home straight entrance of the hurdle course from the rear of the main grandstands. Viewing from ground level is good and even in the centre course there is good viewing of nearly all the course.

Fontwell has been voted best small course in the South on countless occasions and the award is justified. The setting is beautiful and the owners, Northern Racing, have resisted the temptation to paint anything that does not move in their corporate green colours. They have managed to maintain the special atmosphere of the course. There is plenty of green paint around but it has been applied sympathetically.

Some jump courses lend themselves to the winter climate, Fontwell is one of those rare jump courses that fully comes into itself in the summer. In terms of somewhere to spend a lovely days racing in the summer sun Fontwell must rank alongside Windsor and, dare I say, its close neighbour Goodwood.

Idiosyncratic is a word that can be applied to quite a few courses but none more so than Fontwell. This is down to its unique figure-of-eight chase course. Yet it is this very idiosyncrasy that adds to the appeal of the course. If you visit Fontwell for a days racing you must, at least once, watch a chase race from the centre of the course, to be more precise watch from just by the intersection. There is nowhere else you will get close to so much racing action in any single race (unless you are a jockey actually competing in a race).

Are there any faults at Fontwell? If there are there are too small to mention. In my initial review I mentioned the catering and the state of the rails round the paddock. Since then the food has improved immensely and the parade ring has been rebuilt.

The management team are to be applauded for maintaining the quality of the course and nor fully switching it over to the corporate identity. I think they realise what a treasure they have.

Catering

There is a restaurant in the new stand, with packages available from £69 a head.

For casual catering the offerings at Fontwell have improved beyond recognition in recent years. Indeed from being close to one of the worse it is now one of the best.

There are a variety of food outlets around the course offering casual dining options, although it is with sadness I have to report the jewel in the

crown, an Indian take-away, has now closed down, which is a great pity as it was one of the best casual food outlets to be found at any UK racecourse. However when the course was visited in September 2010 a unit selling paella had appeared and that comes highly recommended with a very filly and tasty paella available for £4 or £6.

There are food outlets in the Premier Stand, with main meals (£5.50 - £6.00), baguettes £3.20 and, most impressively for a racecourse, salad pots for £4.00 - £4.50. How nice to see a racecourse finally embracing healthy eating options.

There was a unit selling various pies at £4 a go along with a selection of assorted hot meals. Baguettes £3.50 - £4.95 and sandwiches £3.10

There is a Barrie Cope seafood bar, invariably popular with a range of hot and cold options. Prices around the £3 -£4 mark.

Even the mobile units are more "upmarket" than most. There is a Pasty unit selling – pasties!! Cost £4 each.

There is a more general unit selling Fish & Chips (£6.30), sausage and chips (£5.00), Burgers (£4.00 - £7) as well as other options.

Bitter and Lager were both priced at £3.40 and water was £1.50 a bottle.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

21 were operating in the main enclosure with a single brave sole in the course enclosure. Betting was to an average over round of 1.6% but this was only achieved by one race actually betting to a 98% margin, ignore this race and the over round was an very poor 2%

Racecard

Costing £2.50 the card is adequate with a good guide to the course and the facilities. Race details were adequate.

Toilets

The toilets were adequate and clean.

Parade Ring



Situated behind the main stands the oval parade ring, in keeping with the rest of the course, it has well tended shrubberies. The saddling boxes are adjacent to the paddock, which also serves as a pre-parade ring.

A new winners enclosure has been added at one end of the parade ring.

Non Racing Attractions

Arundel and its lovely castle is within easy reach as is the historic cathedral city of Chichester, which also has a lovely quaint shopping centre. For sea lovers Bognor Regis is just down the road.

Contact Details

	www.fontwellpark.co.uk
	01243 543335
	Fontwell Park Racecourse Fontwell Nr Arundel West Sussex BN18 0SX

Ownership	Northern Racing
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Fixtures 2012

January 12th & 27th
February 5th & 26th
March 7th & 22nd
April 3rd & 20th
May 4th & 16th
June 3rd , 6th & 21st
August 16th & 30th
September 9th
October 5th , 6th & 24th
November 9th , 18th & 28th
December 11th & 26th

Inspection Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
16/05/07	Overcast	6 jump
03/01/08	Overcast with a bitterly cold wind	7 jump
15/02/09	Bright and sunny	7 jump weekend
06/11/09	Cloudy becoming wet	7 jump midweek
10/03/10	Sunny with chilly wind	7 jump midweek
05/09/10	Sunny	8 jump weekend