

Laytown

Location, Parking and Access



Situated 27 miles north of Dublin via the N1, and is 6 miles from Drogheda.

The nearest station is in Laytown and is a ten minute walk from the course.

Parking is in a local farmers field and is also a ten minute walk from the course. If you arrive very early there are a limited number of parking spaces (about 30) along the seafront on a first come first served basis but they are fully occupied about five hours before racing starts. All the nearby roads have parking restrictions on race day. There is some limited disabled parking available immediately outside the course entrance.

Course Layout

A unique course constructed on the day of racing, it is a straight course offering races over six and seven furlongs only.

There used to be a round course constructed but this is no longer possible due to safety reasons.

Admission

Admission to the enclosure is €15, although viewing on the beach itself is free.

Overview



Unique is a word that is often bandied about too freely, however when used in relation to Laytown it is absolutely appropriate.

Hosting only one race meeting a year the racing takes place not on a permanent track but on Laytown's beach.

The most amazing aspect is the speed in which the course is constructed.

Arriving five hours before racing begins there was virtually no sign of a course, except for a few marker poles near the finish. There were a few stakes marking the edge of the enclosure and almost a mile away the seven furlong start was being set up.

Walking the course was interesting and the going was quite surprising – I

thought it would be on the soft side but, in truth, it was nearer good to firm. A couple of horses cantered past and the indentations from their hooves was no more than half an inch.

By the five furlong marker there was a worrying patch of "false" ground – effectively a little streamlet cutting across the track and a group of council workers were constructing a makeshift dam to stem the flow.

Three hours before the first race and stakes had been planted where the furlong marker poles were to be erected and marker posts for the running rails were appearing. Actually running rails were few and far between. There were a couple of short sections by each of the starts and rail on the far side for the final furlong only. The rest of the course was on open beach.

An hour before the first race and the main focus was on setting up the finishing post. The judges box was a half size Portacabin on top of the cliff and great attention was being paid with complex measuring equipment to ensure everything was in the right place. It was quite amusing to watch as the absolute attention to detail seemed to be in complete contrast to the seemingly relaxed attitude to the construction of the remainder of the course.



It was only half an hour before the start of the first race that the final sections of running rail were complete and the empty beach had been transformed into something resembling a racetrack.

Watching the racing was a democratic experience. You could watch the racing for free from the beach itself or for €15 you could go into the enclosures.

Of course being a "once a year" event the facilities were rudimentary. The weigh room / press room was a marquee. As were the "restaurant" and bar.

Toilets were of the mobile variety and that was more or less it. There were a few benches around the parade ring but nowhere to sit. The stewards were perched precariously on top of some scaffolding and I never did locate the commentary box.



There was a minor excitement before racing when one of the ambulances became stuck in the sand just before the first race – the on course JCB was summoned to pull it out and there was a sharp intake of breath when the rope used to pull the ambulance free made a terrible creaking sound and bets were quickly made as to whether the rope would snap or the

ambulance would be pulled free. Luckily for racegoers it was the latter.

There were also some lovely scenes a little earlier on as a number of the afternoons runners were taken into the water to be exercised or just for a paddle – there were some beautiful sights.

One of the many odd aspects of Laytown is the proliferation of jump jockeys riding, even though it is officially a flat meeting. Indeed the weights of the races are framed to cater for the heavier jumps boys.

One of the aspects I most like about going racing in Ireland is the atmosphere – it is so different from in the UK. The welcome is invariably friendly and although the level of drinking is similar you don't get the same edge at the Irish courses. It is just a jolly occasion with everyone having fun. I was hoping for the same at Laytown but was, I'm afraid to say, disappointed to find the vast majority of racegoers at the course were Brits. They easily outnumbered the locals and as a result the atmosphere wasn't as I expected it to be. It was a mixture of a point-to-point and gaff track atmosphere.

Viewing of the racing was limited, although there was a big screen behind the parade ring – in all honesty it was probably too risky putting a big screen on the beach – it would have sunk without trace by race three. It was also possible to stroll down to the starts, not surprisingly flag starts as nobody would risk stalls on the beach, where there was, apparently a nice relaxed atmosphere.

Catering

Catering is somewhat restricted. There was a catering tent with arrange of hot meals for around €12.50. A range of sandwiches and cold snacks were also available.

There was the ubiquitous burger van plus a couple of ice cream vans and a confectionary stall.

The beer tent was Murphy's as opposed to Guinness branded.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

There were around 20 bookmakers standing.

The Tote operation was limited with two mobile units serving the needs of racegoers.

Racecard

Costing €3 there is certainly a great deal of advertising in the cards. It can be difficult to find the actual race details.

Once found though the detail is good. With a maximum of ten runners in each race it was possible to show all the runners on facing pages.



Toilets

Only temporary facilities, insufficient and frequent queues.

Parade Ring

A temporary ring, surrounded by some benches.

Contact Details

	No web site
	(041) 984 2111
	Laytown Races, Laytown, Co. Meath

Fixtures 2012

September 13th

Inspection Dates

Date	Weather	Type
11/09/08	Variable sunshine and heavy showers	6 flat midweek