

Leopardstown

Location, Parking and Access



The course is situated on the southern outskirts of Dublin, a mere 6km from the city centre.

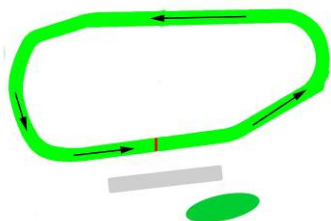
The nearest DART station is at Blackrock, from where it is a short taxi ride to the course. The Dublin tram system (LUAS) terminus at Sandyford is a short walk from the course.

A special bus service operates from the city centre on race days.

Although Dublin airport is to the north of the city, there is a regular coach service from the airport to Bewley's Hotel in Leopardstown, also a short walk from the course. During the day there are between two and six coaches an hour depending on demand. Fares are €8 single and €14 return, with a journey time of between 60 – 80 minutes depending on traffic.

There is plenty of free parking available, mainly on grass.

Course Layout



Leopardstown is a left handed circuit of 1 mile 6 furlongs with a run in of 2¾ furlongs and a slight uphill finish.

For National Hunt races there are 7 hurdles and 10 fences on circuit.

It is a wide course with a sweeping final bend, which can lead to some inexperienced riders taking a too wide a course.

The track favours galloping types.

Admission

General admission varies from €15 for "standard" meetings up to €25 for the Christmas Festival.

Tickets for the "top level" seating range from €30 through to €50.

Annual membership: standard €235 , annual seat €350, senior €180 and under 25 (admission only) €99

Discounts are available for students, seniors and groups, as well as for advance bookings.

Overview

If you read most UK produced racecourse guides they invariably refer to Leopardstown as being "Ireland's Sandown"

That epithet is somewhat patronising as Leopardstown is a great racecourse in its own right, indeed it stages more high class races annually than Sandown so, nowadays, it could be equally valid to describe Sandown as "Britain's Leopardstown".

Having said that, even though this was my first visit to the Dublin course, there was a mild feeling of déjà vu as the course is very much modelled on its Esher cousin. Indeed in the not too distant past it even had a separate, straight, sprint course. OK they do race the opposite way round but it is easy to see how the comparisons are made.

From the flat, galloping track (complete with golf course and driving range – just like Sandown), through to the large single grandstand, with excellent viewing, the similarities are striking.

However Leopardstown is no clone and it has its own unique selling points.

I am not sure if there is more than one way into the course but the main entrance has a long, sweeping, tree lined approach road, all the more attractive with the autumn colours.

The road leads to large, well marshalled car parks, looking large enough to cope with even the busiest of days.

The entrance hall is a modern functional building, plenty of glass and bright and airy.

One of the first things you notice at Leopardstown is the space. The meeting I attended was on a Bank Holiday and although I am not sure of the numbers, there was plenty of space to move around.

On the really big days crowds of around 20,000 are attracted and one is left with the feeling even with those numbers it would not be uncomfortably crowded.

The centrepiece is the long sweeping, single grandstand, offering plenty of tiered viewing and an area with some free seating.

Viewing from the grandstand is excellent and generally unobstructed, there is a very minor obstruction from metal railings towards the middle of the stand (presumably a legacy from when there was a "dual enclosure" policy at the course.)



There is a large area in front of the stands, partly grassed and partly concrete. The latter area housing the betting ring.

The grey, concrete almost impersonal exterior of the grandstand belies the delights to be found inside the stand itself.

It contains a number of bars and eateries in a layout which can almost be compared with a large hotel. For example you go up a flight of wide stairs and at the top to the left and right are two bars which would not look out of place as function rooms at a reasonable hotel, indeed it was almost a disappointment not to see a disco ball hanging from the ceiling.

As I write this in October 2010 part of the interior has been closed off to allow construction of a new Tote Hall.

Not all the bars were open the day I visited, however looking around it seems there are an adequate number to cope with really busy days.

There is also a Food Hall inside the main stand.

There are a couple of delights to be found in the main stand as well.

The first is Madigans Bar, approach it from inside the grandstand it looks like any other racecourse bar. Step outside the grandstand it has a façade like that of a typical Irish Bar – it looks incongruous against the main grandstand, but it equally a fun addition.

Equally strange, and I have yet to find the reasoning behind it, is the area opposite the bar has a number of advertising hoardings extolling the virtues of living in Australia – quite why anybody would wish to swap Ireland with Australia is quite beyond me!!

The other “hidden gem” is an area next to Food Hall where there are a number of cabinets displaying racing memorabilia, well worth spending a quarter of an hour having a browse.



Madigans Bar Front



Racing Memorabilia

Leopardstown is in stark contrast to the Spartan, rustic charms of the majority of Ireland's courses but that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Leopardstown is a great course, staging some great racing, conveniently located for anybody in the Dublin area. Indeed with the links from the airport also an ideal course for any UK visitors.

Much as I love the Irish rural tracks I have to say Leopardstown has that intangible something extra. It is a course I felt happy and relaxed at from the moment I arrived and although I waited a long time for my first visit, I am already checking flights for my next visit.

If you are in Ireland when there is racing at Leopardstown make a point of visiting. Even if you aren't in Ireland and are UK based still make an attempt to get there – you will not be disappointed.

Catering

There is a restaurant on the second level of the Grandstand, accommodating up to 400 diners. Further details available from the course.

There is a food hall in the Grandstand offering a range of main courses from €9.90 through to €14.50. I did not get a chance to sample the food but it seemed popular throughout the afternoon, which must be a good sign.

One of the bars was selling a selection of food, including burger and chips or chicken and chips for €7.50, sausage and chips €6 or chips for €3.

They also had sandwiches for sale at €5.

There were plenty of bars situated around the course, unfortunately there were no prices on display.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

There were 35 bookmakers standing in the ring although they were betting to a very measly average over round of 141.5%

Racecard

Probably the only disappointing factor. Yes it was functional and not cluttered with advertising but it is questionable as to whether it is worth the €3 charge.

Toilets

Certainly adequate for the numbers at the meeting I attended, I imagine there could get crowded on the busier days.

Parade Ring



A pleasant parade ring situated behind the grandstand. There are steppings at the far end of the ring, however it is large with plenty of space. What did make me smile were the double yellow lines painted alongside one edge of the parade ring.

The winners enclosure is located within the parade ring.

Contact Details

	www.leopardstown.com
	(01) 2890500
	Leopardstown Racecourse, Foxrock Dublin 18, Ireland.

Fixtures 2012

January 28th & 29th
February 12th
March 4th & 28th
April 15th
May 13th
June 8th, 14th & 21st
July 5th, 12th, 19th & 26th
August 9th & 16th
October 27th
November 4th
December 26th, 27th, 28th & 29th

Inspection Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
25/10/10	Sunny	8 flat bank holiday

