

# Marsa

## Location, Parking and Access

Situated 4km south of Valletta in the town of Marsa, the course is well signposted in the area.

A number of bus services pass nearby the course.

There is a car park at the course, rather dusty but adequate.

If staying on holiday local tour operators do door-to-door return trips from hotels to the course and back again. Cost €7 plus admission.

## Course Layout

The course is an oval, cinder and sand track, approximately 1100m round.

The bends are quite heavily cambered.

The course predominately stages trotting races, although they do have occasional flat races as well, albeit with a maximum field size of eight runners, whereas trotting races have a maximum field size of 16 runners.

## Admission

Admission to the course is €5

## Overview

Marsa is Malta's premier racecourse, although with only one course on the main island and one on nearby Gozo it has little competition. Racing is staged under the auspice of the Malta Racing Club.

Situated in a residential area the course is certainly more compact than UK courses, indeed from a UK perspective it is more like an enlarged greyhound stadium than a race track.

That is not where the similarities end either as the facilities are reminiscent of those at greyhound tracks.

The biggest problems is the stands are south facing and although most racing takes place in the winter the sun does cause problems for spectators.



There is one covered stand and several uncovered stands. The covered stand provides some protection when the sun is relatively high but as it drops mid afternoon shelter in the covered stand is limited. Indeed it is interesting to note early on that the stand fills in a lopsided manner with spectators congregating in

groups in seemingly random areas. It transpires these are the regulars who grab the spots which remain in the shade the longest.



Behind the stands, cool and in the shade, are the bookmakers "pitches" and a number of vendors selling assorted refreshments, more of both later in the review.

The bookmakers "pitches" are like kiosks where the prices are displayed on boards, although the processing is manual with hand written betting tickets.

There is seating in the covered stand and all the stands, both covered and open provide excellent viewing of the entire track. There is no big screen or closed circuit TV provision.

Results are announced in both Maltese and English although the commentary is entirely in Maltese – both, however, are spoiled by the commentator seemingly having the microphone too close to his mouth and shouting.

The whole public area is on hardstanding and punters are close to the action.

The atmosphere was very good with the crowd getting quite animated as the runners come for home.

Racegoers seemed to generally fall into two groups. An elder section who look like wizened racegoers who have been attending the track for years and, by total contrast, a large number of families. Some coming with three or four generations. There were also a large number of racegoers in their late teens and twenties.



## Catering

Oh dear where do I start on this one. As mentioned above there are a number of catering outlets behind the stands.

There was a sweet and soft drink vendor who was very busy and although beer was on sale very few were drinking it – possibly due to a different drink culture, possibly due to the heat.

There were food vendors who had samples on display, which I have to say looked attractive. I only wish they put more effort into the finished product.

Offers included a Chinese mixture €5, a burger and hot dog meal €4.80, hot dog or burger meal €3.70 and assorted baguettes for €1.50 through to €3.

I decided to go for the hot dog meal. Firstly it looked nothing like the display dish. On a positive point the fried potatoes were very good. As for the remainder, well the roll had the consistency and, I assume, taste of a bathroom sponge. The cooked onions were cold and when I say cold I mean cold not warm and the hot dog itself I took one bite, spat it out and the whole lot went in the bin.

Personally I wasn't prepared to risk Marsa belly.

## **Ancillaries**

### ***Bookmakers***



There are two betting options at Marsa with bookmakers or with the Tote. Well that is the theory, in practice there is one option, the Tote.

There were six bookmakers standing, situated in a building behind the stands. All the contests were 16 runner events yet the longest price I saw on offer with the bookmakers all afternoon was 6/1 (yet the indicative Tote dividends were around 33/1).

Every race was a 300% plus book, the opener for example was 374%. The worrying thing is they were doing a brisk trade.

### ***Racecard***

Costing €1.25 it was very basic, more akin to a greyhound racing card. Just details of the runners with a maximum of three lines of form for each runner.

Interestingly the racecard covered not only the current days meeting but the next meeting in two days time.

### ***Toilets***

Adequate is probably the fairest description

### ***Parade Ring***

There isn't one.

### Non Racing Attractions

Well Malta has everything from historic sites going back to 3,000 BC right through to sandy beaches. So options are almost endless.

### Contact Details



[www.maltaracingclub.com/index.htm](http://www.maltaracingclub.com/index.htm)

### Fixtures

The racing season extends from mid-November through to the end of May, thus avoiding the extreme summer heat.

Racing generally takes place on Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons with extra meetings on holidays.

### Inspection Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
06/12/09	Sunny and warm (20 degrees)	8 trotting weekend