

Plumpton

Location, Parking and Access



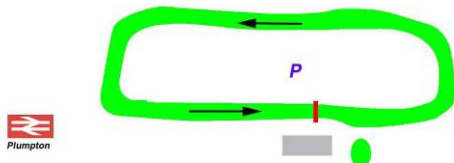
Plumpton village is located 10 miles north of Brighton. From London take the M23 then the A23 then the A272 to Haywards Heath, from where the course is signposted. From Brighton take the A23 then the A273 to Hassocks and again follow local signs.

Depending on which way the course is approached, parking is either in the centre of the course or behind the main stands. The former can get very boggy especially if it has been raining, on the latest inspection it was noted that the road into the course has now been surfaced with tarmac, however parking is still on grass and I observed at least three cars having to make use of the course tractor for a tow.

Plumpton station is next to the course and it is on the London Victoria – Eastbourne / Hastings line, with an hourly service in both directions. Journey time from London is a shade under 1 hour

There is a coach service from Brighton station departing 1½ hours before the first race and returning ½ hour after the last race ... this is available on a first come / first served basis at a cost of £4 return.

Course Layout



Plumpton is a tight oval circuit of 1 mile 1 furlong and it is left handed (anti-clockwise). The back straight is very much downhill and, correspondingly the home straight is very much uphill. The jumps can be testing, coupled with a short run-in means that horses need to be agile and also possess sufficient stamina. Previous course winners should be followed.

Admission

Plumpton operates a single enclosure policy, apart from the Easter Festival. Admission is £16 (£14 if booked in advance). For the Easter Festival the centre course will be open at £12.

Annual membership: £180 single, £340 dual (discounts if purchased before 3rd January 2011.)

Discounts: Seniors Advanced

Overview

I don't think even the most stalwart supporter of Plumpton would even attempt to make the case for the enclosures being picturesque.



Functional, basic and no frills is probably the kindest description that springs to mind. There are three stands. I'll come to the course enclosure later on.

The, former, Premier stand is on two levels. The upper level contains unreserved seating whilst the lower is standing only. The upper level is under cover and a glass wall at the top end provides some protection from the wind, unless you happen to be sitting in the back row. With some head movement it is possible to see all of the course from these seats. The standing area is approximately 50% under cover and is well tiered, however from the top levels the view of the home straight is obstructed by the main stand, from the lower levels viewing is perfect.

The main stand has no seating and is about 80% under cover. The majority of the stand is in the main enclosure with a small part sectioned off for the Premier enclosure. Viewing is good with all the jumps visible.

The third stand is again standing only and it goes to a higher level than the other main stand. The steppings are a little on the steep side. Viewing from most of the stand is perfect, although at the upper levels the view of the end of the home straight is obstructed by the other stands.

The stands are close to the track and they have hard standings in front. There are some benches on the hard standing in the Premier enclosure. Behind the stands there is a general tatty feel with lines of fast food vendors and the accompanying aromas.

The centre course is very basic, although the viewing was surprisingly good with a fair percentage of the course visible. Facilities are basic and shelter minimal.

Plumpton is no Ascot or York but a typical country track and I mean that in a positive way. It presents National Hunt racing in a way some purists think it should be presented. If you ever want to visit a "typical" National Hunt track then you could do a lot worse than going to Plumpton. It's a

small track, and I mean that in the physical sense, which means the horses must be giddy after a three mile race, however it does mean you will get to see the action and, after all isn't that why we go racing?

Plumpton is the place to see racing, not be seen. Judging from the number of people spilling out of the train when I arrived and listening to the accents it seems to attract a large number of Londoners. The quality of racing can be quite good with the big stables sending out some of their future stars, there is every chance the winning novice chaser at Plumpton may turn out to be a future Cheltenham winner. To help that happen the course offer a £60,000 prize for any horse winning a novice chase at Plumpton and then going on to win a race at the same seasons Cheltenham festival. (In 2005/06 Voy Por Ustedes managed to claim the prize). It's initiatives like that which helps attract some good quality horses.

OK the facilities aren't brilliant, but does that really matter when the ambiance and atmosphere are good. The only area that really does need some attention is the centre course, it is very much the Cinderella.

Viewing is surprisingly good and the one race I watched from the centre course I was able to follow (with binoculars) most of the way round. However the 'facilities' are really wanting. The bar restaurant looks like a rejected double glazing show pavilion, including patio doors that don't seem to shut. It has a small selection of beers, some limp looking pies and a welcome that makes a cold day in Moscow seem warm by comparison.

On the subject of welcoming that's something that does seem to be missing at the course, the staff are courteous and efficient but the friendly smile seen at some other courses isn't there. Perhaps they're just more reserved in Sussex. Then again there was a bitterly cold wind whipping round the course.

In summary, Plumpton isn't going to win any awards for aesthetics but it wins my vote for being a great National Hunt venue, if I lived closer I would be a member.

Catering

As is often the case the main restaurant has the best views of the course, situated on the top of the Premier grandstand. The menu includes a three course silver service lunch, prices £40 - £50 per person depending on the meeting. (Advance booking almost essential)

Aside from that the catering tends to veer towards the cheap and cheerful, one exception being Barrie Cope's seafood bar. Otherwise you are looking a fish and chips, noodles, curries, pies and sandwiches. Now I'm not criticising this kind of fare, however it would be nice to see more on offer between the silver service sit down and a noodle van.

There are a number of bars around the course although, to be honest, none of the bars were particularly inviting.

Also it was impossible to check the prices of beers and lagers. There was, as is required by law, a price list on display. However it was a typed sheet on the wall behind the bar and as I don't have 20/20 vision I couldn't see the prices.

Sample Prices:

Noodle Bar £5.80 (Various choices), Fish / Chips £6.50, Sausage / Chips £5.00, Pasty's £4 - £4.30, Burgers £3.50 (£4 with cheese)

Seafood Bar

Fish soup £3.50, Prawns with Chilli Dip £4.00, Prawn Curry £4.00, Various shellfish £3.00 - £4.00.

Paddock Bar (Premier Enclosure), Pies £4.00, Sausage Bap £3.30

Bitter and Lager are £3.60 a pint with a real ale bar having various beers at £4.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

19 were standing in the main enclosure and a further 3 in the course enclosure. Betting to an over round of 1.5%.

Racecard

All other courses take note and I am going to shout this from the rooftops.

Plumpton are able to produce a perfectly decent racecard and not charge for it. Further more, it contains less advertising than some racecards you have to pay £2.50 - £3.00 for. So if Plumpton can do it, why can't the others?

The first two pages are given over to a plan of the course, I have to say the drawing are excellent and, dare I say, look better than the reality. There then follows the parish notices and a guide to reading the race card. There then follows a useful list of all the jockeys riding during the afternoon and trainers with entries. Then follows the stats page.

The cards themselves were clear and in colour. There were also two good articles about journalists Chris Poole and George Ennor and ex-commentator Cloudesley Marsham.

Toilets

Toilets are clean and adequate. I did, at one point, wonder if there sufficient, until I found a large toilet block at the end of the main stands.

Parade Ring






The paddock is small and square with two splendid oak trees in the centre. Although not large it is in keeping with the informal atmosphere of the course and, in truth, it never actually became uncomfortably crowded. The winners enclosure is separate from the paddock at the rear of the stands.

There is some limited seating at the Premier end of the ring and a rudimentary tiered viewing dias which would hold half a dozen close friends at a push.

Non Racing Attractions

With Brighton being only a few miles to the South and the South Downs all around there are plenty of non-racing distractions to suit most tastes.

Contact Details	
	www.plumptonracecourse.co.uk
	01273 890383
	Plumpton Racecourse Plumpton East Sussex BN7 3AL

Ownership	Private
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Fixtures 2012
January 2nd, 16th & 31st
February 13th & 27th
March 12th
April 8th, 9th & 27th (eve)
May 13th
September 23rd
October 22nd
November 5th & 19th
December 3rd & 17th

Inspection Dates		
Date	Weather	Type
12/02/07	Cloudy with some showers	7 jump midweek
11/02/08	Sunny and pleasant	7 jump midweek

23/02/09	Overcast	6 jump midweek
13/12/10	Misty and very cold	7 jump midweek
14/02/11	Broken cloud	7 jump midweek
16/01/12	Bright and very cold	7 jump midweek

