

Sandown

Location, Parking and Access

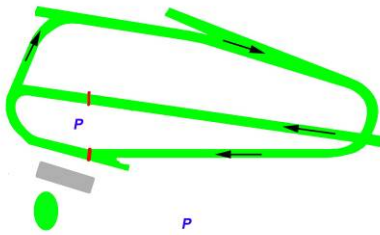


Due to its suburban location access isn't particularly easy, especially during the rush hour. The course is located in Esher on the A307, which links with the A3. There are brown signs to the course locally and from the nearby M25 (J10)

There are two car parks at the course. The centre course park (on grass) is free. There is also a car park at the main entrance for which a charge of £5 is made. On the day of the first inspection there had been several days of rain previously, plus racing the day before, as a result the car park was a virtual bog. (There is some parking on concrete but this seems to be reserved and it not available to the general public). On departure I saw several cars having to be pushed out. It is therefore difficult to see how they can justify a £5 charge in those circumstances.

Esher station is adjacent to the course and on racedays there is a special exit from the station directly into the course. There is a half hourly service to Esher from London Waterloo (more frequent in the rush hour) with a journey time of about 25 mins. Allow 10 – 15 mins to cross the track to the main stands.

Course Layout



There is a round course of 1 mile 5 furlongs which stages flat and jump racing with a small loop at the entrance to the home straight taking the chase course. There is also a straight 5 furlong sprint course which diagonally dissects the round course. The finish is very much uphill and many races have been won and lost on the Sandown

hill.

Sandown favours dour, long striding galloping types. It does not suit front runners.

Draw Advantage: There is no advantage on the round course. However on the sprint course low drawn horses have a distinct advantage with the advantage being even more pronounced the softer the going. (was the opposite way round prior to the 2011 season when the stall numbering system changed)

Admission

Sandown operates a two enclosure policy. Premier (£25 - £29) and Grandstand (£17 - £22) For the Betfred Gold Cup and Coral Eclipse days prices are £40 / £25.

Accompanied under 16's are admitted free of charge.

Jump season membership: £99, Flat season membership £180, full year membership £270

Dress Code:

Premier: Smart Casual. Gentlemen are required to wear a collared shirt which includes polo shirts or a polo / turtle-necked jumper; we do not insist that a jacket and tie are worn. Ladies are not required to wear a hat. Smart Jeans are permitted but must not be ripped or torn. Sportswear including non tailored shorts, football and rugby shirts and trainers are not permitted. Bare tops are not allowed in any enclosure.

Discounts: Advanced Group

Overview



Access to the Premier Enclosure is good with gentle steppings and clearly marked gangways. There is plenty of seating in the upper levels of the stand. Stewarding is good, ensuring the walkways are kept clear although, ironically during the first race the steward who was patrolling the walkways was standing in such a position that the view of the last two hurdles was obscured. Stewards should be told to sit or crouch during racing so they don't obscure the view of the paying customers. Viewing is reasonable with most of the course visible. The only area obscured, notwithstanding obstructive stewards, was the top turn out of the home straight into the side of the course. Viewing from the grass enclosure in front of the stands was also reasonable.

Access to the Grandstand Enclosure is good with gentle steppings and clearly marked gangways. Stewarding is good ensuring the walkways are

kept clear. As with the members enclosure viewing is reasonably good.

Walking to the far end of the enclosure, racegoers can have a reasonable view of the final fences in the home straight, clearly on an advantage at jump meetings.

One poor aspect of the configuration is the position of the sprint course, which is in the middle of the course and well away from the enclosures, also the finishing post is well beyond the enclosures. Consequently you are very reliant on the big screen for viewing the action.

At the rear of all parts of the stand there is a large terrace offering excellent views of the parade ring.

Notwithstanding the parking issues Sandown is one of the best racecourses in the country.

The executive appear to care about the racegoers and they are aware of why people are there – to see the racing. Other racecourses could learn a great deal from Sandown.

One of Sandown's trademarks is the horsewalk from the parade ring to the course which gives an excellent close up view of the horses as they go out to and return from the track.

In truth it is harder to think of a better place to spend an afternoon at the races and, as an added bonus, the racing is usually of a very high quality.

Another negative appeared at the end of the Coral Eclipse meeting. Admittedly this is, sadly, not a problem unique to Sandown and it is becoming increasingly endemic at many courses, especially at weekends. The problem, too many people getting "boozed up", this resulted in a couple of fights breaking out, I am tempted to almost call the incidents mass brawls. As I said though this is more a reflection of society than anything else.

Catering

Free mince pies for all at the December meeting as you enter the course sets the scene.

Catering at Sandown cannot be faulted, with hot and cold food to suit all tastes and pockets.

The only minor criticism is there are not enough tables so you may have to eat standing up, having said that it isn't the courses fault it is more down to inconsiderate racegoers holding onto the tables when they have finished eating, assuming they have, of course eaten in the first place.

Restaurant packages are available from £59 plus VAT.

In the Premier Enclosure there is a Brasserie with starters £6.50 - £7.90, mains £11.50 - £19.50 and desserts £5.50 - £6.95.

There were a large number of mobile outlets ranging from the mandatory burger stall through to a roast chestnut vendor.

In the food court there are various outlets.

Pies £4.20, Sandwiches £3.00 - £4.30, Main Meals £4.95 - £7.70 , Salt Beef Roll £5.25, Roast Chestnuts £2 or £2.80. Soup £4.

Bitter and Lager were £4 and water an eye watering £2 a bottle

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

59 of them standing, so plenty of choice available. Over round per runner was 1.63%.

Racecard

Costing £2.50 or £3 (depending on the meeting), it was reasonable value for the money. A5 in size it is slightly larger than the usual racecard, which can make fitting it in your pocket a bit more difficult. There was an excellent, full colour, plan of the racecourse covering all the facilities.

There was a free racecard draw for a Spa Day for two. The racecards were well presented , with form, colours and a laymans race description.

The centre of the racecard had a very good tribute to Desert Orchid, a previous winner of the days feature race, who died nineteen days before the meeting. Coverage of the main race was excellent including a history of the race and trends from the last ten years. There were photographs of both the horses and jockeys. All in all the big race was covered very well indeed.

Toilets

Toilets are clean and presentable although by the middle of the afternoon there were long queues for the toilets of both sexes.

Parade Ring



The parade ring is large, triangular, with excellent viewing and could arguably be described as one of the central attractions of the course. On leaving the parade ring the horses approach the track along one of the most scenic and well known horse walks in the country.

There is a separate winners enclosure in front of the weighing room.

Non Racing Attractions

Being close to London there are plenty of attractions. For those who like some excitement in their life Thorpe Park is not too far away.

Hampton Court is about a ten minute drive away.

Contact Details

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Ownership	Jockey Club
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Fixtures 2012

Jump

January 7th
February 4th, 17th & 24th
March 9th & 10th
November 11th
December 7th & 8th

Mixed

April 28th

Flat

April 27th
May 24th (eve) & 31st (eve)
June 7th (eve), 15th & 16th
July 6th, 7th, 18th (eve), 25th (eve) & 26th
August 9th (eve) & 31st
September 1st, 14th & 19th

Inspection Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
02/12/06	Autumnal but dry	6 Jump weekend
05/07/08	Sunny	7 flat feature
13/02/09	Sunny intervals, chilly	6 jump midweek
06/02/10	Overcast becoming chilly	6 jump weekend
05/02/11	Overcast and windy	7 jump weekend
07/01/12	Broken cloud	6 jump weekend

