

Wincanton

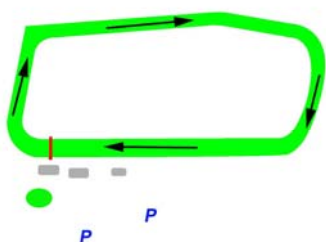
Location, Parking and Access



Located just outside the town, the course is well signposted from the A303 (however make a mental note of the way you come in as the signage back to the A303 is not particularly good). Also watch out for the entrance signs for the car parks, they are not immediately obvious, luckily there are three entrances and I had sailed past the first one before I realised. It may help if the course put some temporary signs on the opposite side of the road warning of the impending entrance. Parking is on grass and is a large area.

Access by public transport isn't ideal. The nearest station is Templecombe (on the Waterloo – Exeter line, hourly service). There is a courtesy bus to coincide with train arrivals on racedays, check with the racecourse for details. Castle Cary (on the Paddington – Bristol line, infrequent service) is 8 miles north of the course.

Course Layout



This is a jumps track of 1 mile and 3 furlongs. It is a right handed (clockwise) course and it is generally flat.

The fences are very stiff and the course is a galloping one. Also with the relatively short run-in it is possible for front runners to poach a lead.

Admission

Wincanton operates a three enclosure policy, Premier (£18 - £20), Paddock (£13 - £15) and Course (£6 - £8).

Discounts are available for advance booking and for groups of 16 or more. Accompanied under 16's are admitted free.

Annual membership: Contact course for details

There does not appear to be a published dress code for the course, although common sense should prevail.

Discounts: Advanced Group

Overview

Wincanton has an unusually large Premier enclosure. The "main" stand has tiered viewing with gentle but deep steppings on the lower half and a seated area in the upper half. Viewing of the course is generally good. The golf club house briefly obstructs viewing of the entrance to the back straight and from some of the seats viewing the entry to the home straight on the hurdles course is obstructed by the main grandstand. Having said that neither is a major inconvenience and there is a big screen to cover the blind spots.

The other stand in the enclosure is shared with the Grandstand enclosure and is a tiered viewing area, again with gentle but deep steppings. Viewing is again good, save for the golf clubhouse or any tall neighbours.



The frontage to the enclosure is a combination of hard standing and grass, although there is more grass, and there are some garden benches for seating. Viewing from the ground level is not particularly good and more reliance would have to be made of the big

screen.

In the main enclosure the grandstand must be amongst the longest at any of the smaller courses (and I do not mean smaller in a disparaging way – see later comments). There is some bench seating along the back row but basically it is a tiered standing area with gentle but deep steppings. Viewing is generally good – there is the usual clubhouse obstruction and a tree obstructs the view from the side window when near the top of the stand ... no great shakes as it is only a small part of the home straight that cannot be seen. The only mild criticism is the enclosure ends a fair way from the finishing line so in a tight finish you are fully reliant on the big screen to see the finish in detail.

The course enclosure is a large, mainly grassed area with a single small stand. Unfortunately access between the course and other enclosures is not possible, so a more detailed inspection of this enclosure was not possible.

Displayed on one wall at the course are commemorative plaques from the Racegoers Club awarding the course "Best Small Course – South West" – winners every year from 1990 – 2006 (apart from 2002), not a bad record. It is interesting the course comes into the small course category as I would consider Wincanton to be far better than a typical "small course" and arguably better than some of its bigger "rivals".

There is a spacious feeling to the course, especially at mid-week meetings. Even at the busy weekend meeting, where the crowds were

appreciably larger, there still was not a felling of claustrophobia. The staff are, generally, welcoming and helpful. Stewarding is unobtrusive but efficient.

Wincanton generally offers good quality racing and viewing is good from all the stands, although limited from ground level. There is clearly a large, loyal, local following as it is one of those courses where there are a large number of annual members badges on display.

It is also good to see that the course are not sitting on their laurels and are striving to improve the facilities on offer. The new Winning Post restaurant being the latest example.

Wincanton is a course where you can have a good days racing, in convivial surroundings ... visit and enjoy – certainly if I lived closer I would be a regular visitor, but you know what, I did not even begrudge the 260 mile round trip on either visit.

Catering

There are now two main restaurants at the course.

The new Winning Post restaurant offers track viewing, something that was previously lacking at the course. Packages are available from £80 a person. Pre-booking is essential.

The Kingwell Restaurant used to be the primary eating venue. (I have used this restaurant on a previous visit and the food and service is excellent.) The restaurant overlooks the parade ring, unfortunately it doesn't offer viewing of the course. Packages are available from £60.

At the quieter mid-week meeting and there were only three mobile units. One, in the main enclosure, selling burgers (£4 singles / £6 doubles) and another, in the Premier enclosure, selling coffee. The third was a burger van in the course enclosure. At the weekend meeting there were many more units, however on busy days it is almost impossible to meet demand and there were the inevitable queues.

There are plenty of other outlets selling food and drinks. In the Premier enclosure the See More Business bar also had a seafood restaurant. Fish Soup (£3.00), Fish Pie (£5.90) or seafood platter (£9.70). I tried the seafood pie which was filling and good value for money.

The Stalbridge Bar had sandwiches from £2.70 or soup and a roll for £2.10, as well as a selection of pies.

In the Grandstand enclosure there is the Badger Bar. It has a selection of main meals (£5.90) – but very tasty nonetheless, Pork Baps for £3.70 or pork baguettes for £4.20. A pork carvery was available for £6.

The Chasers café bar, open at the busier meetings, had a selection of pizza and pies and a two course set lunch.

Wincanton offers a good range of good quality food at very reasonable prices, others courses could visit Wincanton and learn. If Wincanton can provide good food without ripping off the punters then why can other courses follow their example?

Bitter and lager are priced at £2.80. Bottled water was £1.50.

Wincanton is possibly the only course where food prices have dropped since the previous year.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

There were a healthy number of bookmakers standing in both enclosures. Betting at the larger weekend meeting was to an average over round of a not overly generous 1.7% a runner.

Racecard

The racecard, costing £2.50, serves the function it is designed for pretty well. It contains a useful index, but you have to wait until page 5 before you find it. There is a good, colour, plan of the course.

At the weekend meeting there editorial pages covering the two big races of the day.

Toilets

This is probably the one area where there is reason to gripe. The facilities are certainly adequate to cope at a midweek meeting. However at the weekend meeting there were queues in all the toilets throughout the afternoon. Perhaps the course should consider bring in some temporary facilities for the really popular meetings? *(Postscript:- the course management have come back and said they will have extra toilets on the busier days)*

Parade Ring

The parade ring / winners enclosure is situated behind the stands. There is no seating but a good amount of tiered viewing, more so at the winners enclosure end. The paddock attracted good crowds. A moderate size, it is sufficient to cope with the field sizes at Wincanton.

The pre-parade ring is very close and again popular with racegoers.

Non Racing Attractions

Reasonably well located at the gateway to the South West.

Cheddar and Wookey Hole are both in easy striking distance, as are the delightful cities of Bath and Wells.

Contact Details	
	www.wincantonracecourse.co.uk
	01963 32344
	Wincanton Racecourse, Wincanton, Somerset, BA9 8BJ

Ownership	Jockey Club
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Fixtures 2012
January 7th & 21st
February 2nd & 18th
March 8th, 9th & 25th
April 5th & 22nd
May 10th (eve) & 15th
October 18th & 28th
November 10th & 22nd
December 6th & 26th

Inspection Dates		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
01/05/07	Hot and sunny	6 jump midweek
10/11/07	Overcast with late sun, cold wind	7 jump weekend
29/04/08	Wet	7 jump midweek
03/12/09	Dry but bitterly cold	6 jump midweek