

Royal Ascot

Posted by Peter on 19 June 2009



Hats at Royal Ascot. Photo by [Lizi G/flickr](#).

Today we go horse racing, and we meet people with lots of money and no [dress-sense](#)!

Ascot is a small town, south-west of London, and close to the royal castle at Windsor.

In 1711, Queen Anne went horse-riding from Windsor, and "discovered" Ascot. She decided that it was exactly the right place for horse races. So the poor folk who grazed their cows or their pigs on the land had to move, and there has been a race-course at Ascot ever since.

There are [race meetings](#) at Ascot throughout the year. In the summer, the races are "on the flat", which means that the horses simply run round the race course. But in the winter, the racing is "over the fences", which means that the poor horses have to jump over fences as well as race round the course.

The greatest race meeting of the year is called Royal Ascot, and it is one of the grandest social occasions of the year, at least for people who care about grand social occasions. Royal Ascot is taking place this very week, from Tuesday to Saturday, and I see from [the Royal Ascot website](#) that there are still a few tickets left. Before you rush off to buy a ticket, however, here are a few things which you should know about Royal Ascot:

One, it is expensive. You will pay about Â£60 per person per day for a [grandstand](#) ticket. You cannot actually buy a ticket for the [poshest](#) area, the Royal Enclosure. To get a ticket for the Royal Enclosure, you have to know the right people.

Two, the Queen will be there, and lots of other royals and celebrities, and if you are lucky you may see some of them.

Three, Ascot racecourse is very [concerned](#) that people should wear the right clothes. [Morning coats](#) and [top hats](#) are good. Jeans, t-shirts and trainers are bad - very bad. (If you do not actually own a morning coat or a top hat, you can hire them from a company called [Moss Brothers](#). In other countries, do you have to hire

Royal Ascot

Posted by Peter on 19 June 2009

clothes in order to watch a horse race?)

Four, the hats are more important than the horses. Ascot is famous for the extraordinary hats that the ladies wear. Many of these hats are [masterpieces](#) of [structural](#) engineering. There is a link on the website to photos of some of this year's finest hats.

Five, eating and drinking is almost as important as the hats. Last year, race-goers at Royal Ascot drank 60,000 bottles of champagne and ate 11,500 boxes of strawberries.

Six, the horse racing does not really matter, but if you are interested an Irish horse called Yeats won the Ascot Gold Cup yesterday. Second was another Irish horse, and third was a French horse. English horses don't win at Ascot, just as English tennis players don't win at [Wimbledon](#).

But I had forgotten. Our economy is in recession. People are feeling poorer. Many people have lost their jobs. Surely, this year people will not spend lots of money on champagne and silly hats?

And, yes, there are fewer people at Ascot this year than last year. Champagne sales are down. And one newspaper reports that the Queen's granddaughter, Princess Beatrice, was seen at Ascot wearing a £90 jacket from [Topshop](#) and a pair of shoes which cost only £65. Oh, horror! Times are definitely [hard](#)!

This is the text of the podcast at <http://www.listen-to-english.com/index.php?id=467>,