



ROYAL ASCOT

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SPECTACLE

BY NORAH LAWLOR

Before the start of the Bridgehampton Polo season, there is only one must-attend equestrian event. With a rich heritage and history that is unmatched by any other, Royal Ascot in England is the see-and-be-seen summer kick-off event on the jet-setter's social calendar. At the start of every summer, across the pond in the small village of Ascot in Berkshire, over a quarter-of-a-million spectators, ranging from the general public through the international jet-set, descend upon Ascot Racecourse for the five-day event—this year, the race took place June 16-20, 2009.

Each year, the who's-who of English society attend Ascot – from celebrities and socialites, to media moguls and business tycoons – to watch as the sport's most celebrated athletes and their stallion counterparts vie for the over £4 million (\$6 million) offered in prize money, not to mention bragging rights. The most notable of guests is, of course, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Party, who typically attend every day of the event with a Royal Procession that precedes racing on each day.

With such excitement taking place both on and off the racetrack, one very important question remains: what to wear? For the lucky few admitted to enjoy the races from the Royal Enclosure, the dress code is quite firm—gentlemen are expected to wear full morning dress (tailcoat, pinstriped trousers, necktie and so forth) and a top hat, while women must also don a hat and be appropriately dressed. While the dress code is a bit more lax for those who are not in the Royal Enclosure, many spectators choose

formal dress as well. And, when it comes to hats, the Kentucky Derby has nothing on the chapeaux you'll spot at Royal Ascot. Traditionally taking place on the Thursday of Royal Ascot week, Ladies' Day inspires female attendees to show off the most sensational, fabulous fashions atop their heads. The fashion doesn't just end on Ladies' Day—the Royal Ascot Fashion Show, since its first presentation in 2007, brings together the crème de la crème of designers, such as Vivienne Westwood, Stephen Jones, and Temperley.

While looking your best at Royal Ascot is a given, it may also land you the chance to be the official representative of the event. Each year, model scouts scour the Royal Ascot crowd in search of the next year's Face of Ascot, like 2009 winner Julie Falconer. The top European model agency, Models 1, scouted the Grandstand and Silver Ring during the first two days of Royal Ascot in search of next year's Face of Ascot. The winner received honors such as presenting the trophy to the winners of the Queen Alexandra stakes, being featured in *Royal Ascot Magazine*, and receiving an invitation to return to next year's event, among other exciting opportunities.

With a history that reaches back to 1711, the five-day long fête is the event of the British social and racing calendar—the ultimate way to celebrate the start of the summer season!

While in London...

HOTELS

The Berkeley - One of London's leading luxury hotels, The Berkeley has charmed guests with its chic, contemporary style for over a hundred years.

www.the-berkeley.co.uk

Brown's Hotel - Composed of eleven Georgian townhouses, Brown's Hotel is one of the most intimate and charming hotels in London.

www.brownsotel.com

The Cadogan Hotel - Boasting a prestigious Knightsbridge address, The Cadogan Hotel is a model of British hospitality, blending contemporary style with Edwardian decadence to offer guests a magical experience.

www.cadogan.com

The Lanesborough - All guests at The Lanesborough are warmly received as honored visitors in a private home and are cared for by private butlers.

www.lanesborough.com

The Dorchester - One of the most desirable places in the world, it embodies the highest of traditional values matched with luxurious rooms and suites.

www.thedorchester.com

BREAKFAST

The Wolseley - This eatery on Piccadilly transforms breakfast into a grand event. Another perk—it is London's hottest destination for star spotting at 8 am.

www.thewolseley.com

LUNCH

The Ivy - Exuding sophistication with its fresh menu and timeless décor—popular dishes include Dover Sole, Bang Bang Chicken, Crispy Duck, and Watercress Salad.

www.the-ivy.co.uk

Le Caprice - It's known for warm hospitality and eclectic, seasonal dishes.

www.le-caprice.co.uk

DINNER

China Tang - (at the Dorchester) Conceived by Sir David Tang, the founder of China Clubs in Hong Kong, Peking and Singapore, China Tang offers some of the most authentic Cantonese food outside China.

www.thedorchester.com/restaurants_bars/china_tang.html

The Cinnamon Club - One of the most fashionable Westminster eateries, The Cinnamon Club was founded in 2001 by Iqbal Wahhab, the food writer and founding editor of Tandoori Magazine. Not your average "curry house."

www.cinnamonclub.com

Gordon Ramsay - (At Claridge's) Known for its stylish Art Deco décor and sublime French fare, this restaurant is a testament to Gordon Ramsay's vision. Indulge in a cocktail or glass of champagne at the celebrity playground, Claridge's Bar.

www.gordonramsay.com/claridges

NIGHTCLUBS

Annabel's Club - Located in Berkeley Square—the crowd is chic, the décor is luxurious, and the experience is decadent.

www.annabels.co.uk

Boujis - This exclusive South London club is renowned for being Princes William's and Harry's favorite night spot.

www.boujis.com

Tramp - A legendary members' club and celebrity watering hole since 1969, this cosmopolitan club is an icon and a favorite of many celebrities including The Rolling Stones, Kate Moss, and Sarah Ferguson.



SHEIKH MOHAMMED AT THE ROYAL ASCOT FESTIVAL