

Riding in Richmond Park

Richmond Park is a National Nature Reserve and has been used intensively for horse riding since its first designation as a hunting park by Charles I. Free access for all began in 1761. By the late 1930s pressures of equestrian use had reached their peak due to the increase in population of the surrounding suburbs and the increase in the number of riding establishments, polo activity etc in the vicinity. In 1938, it was reported that 700 horses a day were in the Park. Concern arose from the sheer volume of horses using the park.

So, a management regime involving the introduction of a riding circuit was devised by the Park authorities in liaison with the then National Horse Association, involving a Committee of local riding masters. This approach, with degrees of fine-tuning and a regime giving all-year access via the extensive circuit and a degree of off-track access according to season and weather, has been applied since that time.

Nowadays, four riding schools are situated just outside the Park. The Park also has a Mounted Police unit. The Royal Parks have an excellent leaflet "Riding in Richmond Park", which shows the routes, the location of the stables and the restrictions, regulations and recommendations for riders.

The restrictions for horse riders are:

- Familiarise yourself with the Park Regulations concerning horse riding in the Park and comply with them.
- Riders must proceed at a pace no faster than a hand canter: galloping is prohibited.
- Riding is restricted to horse rides, roads and rings on weekdays from 1.00pm to 7.00pm or close: on weekends and bank holidays from 11.00am to close; and at any time when notices are erected that riding is "on tracks".
- Riding on the perimeter leisure path is not permitted at any time.
- No led horses may enter the Park unless appropriately bridled.
- Riders must not cause their horses to jump any obstacles.
- Racing, riding more than three abreast, showing, trying and breaking in horses is prohibited.

For further information, contact the Royal Parks at Holly Lodge, Richmond Park, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 5HS. Telephone: 0208 948 3209

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