

Horse trading: Highclere Thoroughbred Racing's syndicates give you a leg up on to the horsey set - without being saddled with debt



LUXURY

PUT YOUR SHIRT ON IT

FOR THE ULTIMATE HIGH-END PURCHASE, PART-OWNERSHIP OF A RACEHORSE IS A SURE BET, SAYS NICK FOULKES

Newmarket is a truly schizophrenic place. For the majority of the day it is a regular town – a mix of stately 19th-century architecture and TK Maxx. But at about 5.30am something magical happens, as strings of racehorses trot through gates and out of yards to Newmarket Heath, where they gallop between white rails up a hill, walk down, gallop up again and walk back to their yards. On an average morning around 1,200 to 1,500 horses will make this daily pilgrimage. Standing in the morning mist, watching thoroughbreds pound the countryside is a privilege; one of those experiences usually prefixed by that adjectival construction “money-can’t-buy”.

Except, of course, money can. It is possible to buy a racehorse, put it in training and fritter away a few hundred grand and not even see the horse run, let alone win.

Or you can call Harry Herbert. The Hon Harry Herbert is the great-grandson of Egyptologist


Lord Carnarvon and part of one of the great British horse-racing dynasties: his father and grandfather were both racing managers to the Queen, a job his brother-in-law John now holds – and Harry has an only marginally less important role as Cartier’s racing consultant. But his main business is Highclere Thoroughbred Racing, which is where people like, you, me and Sir Alex Ferguson might turn when we want to get into owning race horses.

Sir Alex may have the money to own a horse or two outright, but he chooses Highclere to manage his racing. If, like me, you can only afford a leg – or a hoof – Highclere can help you, too, by putting you in a syndicate with at least two horses, so even if one goes lame, you still get the chance to go and see your horse run.

The idea of owning a racehorse in partnership long predates the part-ownership boom in other areas; moreover, Highclere understands racing. So even if you are in a syndicate

of, say, 16 people, from a cost of around £10,000, Highclere ensures you get a chance to engage with the culture, as I found when I joined a party of owners – ranging from first-timers to seasoned enthusiasts – in Newmarket.

For the racing neophyte, the experience is powerful. Dinner is in the Jockey Club Rooms in Newmarket, part-country house, part-Pall Mall club, and stiff with the history of racing. The following morning, shortly after the sun gets up, so do you, setting out on a tour of the trainers’ yards.

However, it is the heath that is the most evocative; even if you owned a single sinew of just one of the sleek animals galloping up the long sloping hill, it would be difficult not to feel a sense of enthusiasm and emotional involvement with the sport of kings. I would argue this emotional response is one of the definitions of true luxury: an experience that has the power to change the way you feel. 

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