



KEENELAND TOUR GUIDES

Keeneland initiated its popular Tour Program with a focus on fan development, an important tenet of the track's founding mission: to continually improve racing. A walking tour of the grounds introduces Keeneland, its history, and racing to those unfamiliar with the sport. For fans who know a bit about racing, a view of the horse sales or a behind-the-scenes look at the track creates an affinity for the industry as a whole. Enhance the mix with a tour guide who conveys a passion for Keeneland and racing, and you have converted a visitor into a lifelong racing fan.

The Tour Program is a proven success in its brief history, continually growing to offer new experiences. Moreover, every Keeneland official tour is distinctive because every tour guide is unique. Despite their diversity, all guides enthusiastically share their love of Keeneland with visitors.

"This tour team is as special as Keeneland itself," Tour Coordinator Mary Perkins said. "Each person brings a different personality and approach to their tour presentation. We have many repeat guests because they want to see the guides' varied points of view."

The backgrounds of the tour guides range from those with decades of hands-on horse experience to retirees with a deep appreciation for Keeneland. All are part-time employees, and most hold other positions at Keeneland during race meets and sales.

Keeneland offers a variety of tour options, ranging from a basic one-hour group tour to behind-the-scenes racing and sales tours to private customized tours upon request. One of the most sought-after tours is the race-day Owner's Experience during which guides accompany guests into the saddling paddock to observe pre-race preparations. After watching the race from the winner's circle, they enjoy a mock trophy presentation and a visit from the Keeneland bugler.

Regular tours are available year-round and can be booked in advance online at Keeneland.com or on a walk-in day-of basis, depending on availability. The walking route provides an overview of Keeneland highlighted by watching Thoroughbreds train over the track. The largely unscripted outing offers an opportunity to learn about the history of Keeneland and fun facts about racing as guides personalize the experience.

Premium tours are popular with both racing novices and longtime fans because they offer rare behind-the-scenes views into areas not generally open to the public. Some of these experiences have a scheduled stop in the jockeys' quarters, where visitors can touch racing saddles, boots, and silks while an insider explains the jockeys' race-day routine.

Every day is different at Keeneland, and the guides themselves never really know what they will encounter. Tours might cross paths with Hall of Fame jockeys and trainers, especially during the race meets and sales. Even on ordinary days, tours are extraordinary as guests absorb the sights and sounds that make Keeneland unlike any other venue in the world. **KM**

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MARY PERKINS

KIRK SCHLEA