

MAY
is

STEEPLECHASE TIME

Etta Griffin

CLEAR YOUR CALENDAR IN MAY. ENJOY FOUR WEEKENDS OF STEEPLCHASE EXCITEMENT – WINTERTHUR, WILLOWDALE, RADNOR HUNT AND FAIR HILL ALL HOST RACES THIS MONTH.



The Antique Carriage Parade at Winterthur



A beautiful tailgate brunch at Winterthur

SPRINGTIME IS HERE and the 2016 steeplechase season is bounding to the starting line! Celebrate what's become a treasured annual tradition for generations as horse-lovers and fun-lovers come out to support these spectacular community fundraisers.

Soak in the sunshine with friends—both old and new—and enjoy four straight weekends of riveting races, fine foods, upscale boutiques, carriage parades, tailgating and plenty of fun for the whole family.

Bring your kids, bring your dogs, bring your most fashionable hat and join us in this favorite rite of spring!

TROT BACK THROUGH TIME

Steeplechase is more than just a local event. Its rich history traces back across centuries and continents. Tracing its roots to Ireland in the mid-1700s, steeplechase began as a challenge among foxhunters to test the stamina and speed of their horses by racing over rolling hills, streams and fences from one church steeple to the next—hence the name.

The sport traveled across the pond to our East Coast in the late 19th century, when Thomas Hitchcock, the father of American steeplechase, built a steeplechase training center in Aiken, South Carolina.

With races sanctioned by the National Steeplechase Association now officially held in 12 states, the event has become a festive occasion to join family, friends and other equestrian-enthusiasts for the benefit of our community.

38TH WINTERTHUR POINT-TO-POINT

Treat Mom to a most stylish Mother's Day this year at Winterthur's Point-to-Point! Thanks to the leap year, this annual event falls on Mom's special day for the first time in five years. So plan an elegant day of excitement, taking in the sights, sounds and spectacle of this favorite Brandywine Valley tradition.



Taking it all in at Willowdale Steeplechase



Shopping and activity tents at Willowdale



Hurdle jumpers at Willowdale
PHOTO: JIM GRAHAM

Delight in the rush of the races held amid the splendor of Francis Ford du Pont's former 1,000-acre Winterthur estate, as dedicated horsemen compete for purses totaling \$55,000. With races beginning at 2 p.m., save the morning to enjoy upscale boutique shopping, the much-anticipated antique carriage parade, and a stroll through the display of 50 historic automobiles.

Plan ahead and reserve a spot at the Winterthur Mother's Day Brunch Tent, or at the Dogfish Head Hospitality Tent where you can savor signature beers with delectable tastes from caterer Crave Food Concepts (tickets for \$100). Watch from the rails as you dine.

Benefiting the Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, this event is a fitting celebration of both steeplechase and a community coming together to support a great cause. From stick-horse races for the kids and Point-to-Point competitions for the pups, this day has a wealth of attractions to keep the whole family entertained.

If You Go: Sunday, May 8. 5105 Kennett Pk., Winterthur, DE. Gates open at 10:30 a.m.; races begin at 2 p.m. General admission: \$50, adults; \$15, ages 12-20; free, under 12. Tailgate parking, \$250-\$1,000. More at 302-888-4994; Winterthur.org/ptp.

Tip: Admittance wristbands won't be sold at the gate so be sure to purchase yours by May 7.

24TH WILLOWDALE STEEPLECHASE

Relish the rolling green hills, majestic horses and fun-filled tailgating that make Willowdale's annual steeplechase competition special. Return this year with 10,000 fans for a day of family fun and excitement, with races to enjoy—whether they be horses, ponies or Jack Russell terriers. Add a Kids Alley Activity Tent, tailgate competition, carriage parade and fine shopping and you've got a day to remember.

The magnificent racing course is set on 160 acres in the heart of Pennsylvania's Hunt Country, with a panoramic view offered by the hilly landscape allowing spectators to watch the event as they would in the British Isles. In keeping with the sporting event's roots, the racecourse was designed by an Irishman to replicate some of the most difficult courses in Europe.

Take in the thrill of Willowdale's signature water jump, where jockeys sit on their horses "California Surfing" style and leap



Above and right: The thrills and pageantry of Radnor Hunt Races

PHOTOS BY CARLOS ALEJANDRO



a 12-foot span with an 18-inch drop in elevation. The obstacle has undergone a complete reconstruction this year to add to the thrills and chills.

This event benefits Stroud Water Research Center's fresh water projects, UPenn's School of Veterinary Medicine's New Bolton Center's cutting-edge veterinary treatment for horses and large animals, and Quest Therapeutic Services' equine therapy for disabled children.

Celebrate with friends and family during this long-standing tradition of giving back.

If You Go: Sunday, May 15. 101 E. Street Rd., Kennett Square. Gates open at 10 a.m.; races start at 1:30 p.m. Tickets: \$30 in advance, \$35 at the gate, children under 12, free. Tailgating spaces: \$175-\$450. More at 610-444-1582; WillowdaleSteeplechase.org.

Tip: Remember sunscreen and comfortable shoes for the whole family!

86TH RADNOR HUNT RACES

Wear your best fancy hat or favorite equestrian tie to this year's Radnor Hunt Races and see firsthand the excitement that's been attracting crowds for generations. This classic Main Line spring event offers the best of everything—from fine dining and networking at the corporate sponsors tents to tailgates in family boxes on the hill and at informal parking spots along the rail.

No matter where you are, you'll find the thunder of hooves as horsemen race for purses totaling a whopping \$185,000.

Go red, white and blue at this year's tailgate competition, with the theme "Picnic with the President," and bring your most patriotic decorations, costumes and cuisine. Or enter the competitions for most

fashionable chapeau and best-themed tie. And certainly don't forget to gather 'round for the classic carriage parade.

Proceeds benefit the Brandywine Conservancy's Open Space and Clean Water programs, which preserve local water and more than 62,000 acres of land. So join the race for open space to help preserve our environment with good company and good fun.

If You Go: Saturday, May 21. Radnor Hunt Grounds, 826 Providence Rd., Malvern. Gates open at 10 a.m.; races begin at 1:30 p.m. Tickets: \$75/car (includes all passengers). \$150-\$700 car rail-side parking. For more, 610-388-8383; Radnor HuntRaces.org.

Tip: Get your tickets early to reserve the perfect spot!

82ND FAIR HILL STEEPLECHASE

Visit Maryland to wrap up this month of equestrian entertainment. Held on the former du Pont property and benefiting Union Hospital since 1934, this day of races is Cecil County's highest attended single-day event, drawing in more than 12,000 spectators. Watch eight thrilling races, visit vendors' tents for shopping and dining, swing by the Kid's Corner with your little ones, and up the ante at the only steeplechase race in the country that allows pari-mutuel betting.

If You Go: Saturday, May 28. 402 Fair Hill Dr., Elkton, MD. Gates open at 10 a.m.; races begin at 1 p.m. General admission: \$15, adults; \$10, children; free, under 10; \$5 off before May 23. For more, 484-398-2578; FairHillRaces@gmail.com.

Tip: Bring your lunch and coolers, but leave the glass and pets at home. ♦



Excitement at Fair Hill Races in Elkton, MD



Thousands fill the stands at Fair Hill

PHOTOS (HERE AND BELOW): MAGGIE KIMMITT