

# 5 ways to save on sport and leisure, whether taking part or as a spectator

**1** Fancy following in the footsteps of Tiger Woods? This month could be a good time to try, as golf clubs across the country are offering free coaching sessions. There are some for adults, some for women and others for children. See [www.getintogolf.org](http://www.getintogolf.org) or [www.learnplayinmay.com](http://www.learnplayinmay.com). Club hire is also free for the session.

**2** Many people pay for gym membership then stop going. Mystery Leisure offers three months' free membership in return for feedback on the gym you visit. You must use the gym once a week and answer a questionnaire. See [www.mysteryleisure.co.uk](http://www.mysteryleisure.co.uk).

**3** With Wimbledon fortnight next month, you might want to try one of the growing number of free tennis courts across the country. [www.tennisforfree.com](http://www.tennisforfree.com) has listings and some details of free coaching sessions, too.

**4** A series of free public sport taster sessions will be held in London from next month to September for people of all ages and fitness levels. For more details see [www.london.gov.uk/summer-of-sport](http://www.london.gov.uk/summer-of-sport).

**5** After all that activity, you might fancy a rest. You can be part of the audience at many popular TV shows for free. [www.applausestore.com](http://www.applausestore.com) has details updated daily on all currently available programmes.

# Rip-off Britain?

## Paying the price of watching top clubs in the Premiership

**T**op English football teams have had a great season challenging for honours in European competitions, but following them can be costly. We compared the price of the cheapest seated season ticket for a single adult for 2006/2007 at three English clubs with some of the most famous names in Europe.

In England we looked at last year's Premiership champions Chelsea (£650), Arsenal, who have been champions or runners-up for four of the last five years (£885), and the most well-known English club worldwide, Manchester United (£437).

These were all more expensive than the clubs from other countries we looked at.

For example, Chelsea's season ticket was nearly seven times more than Italian club Internazionale's. Add £7.50 to the cost of the Man United ticket and you get Barcelona (£175 including a compulsory £101.50 membership), Bayern Munich (£175) and Internazionale (£94.50). The Scottish clubs we looked at were also cheaper than their English counterparts. The big two – Celtic and Rangers – came in at £355 and £284.

There are some differences in what you get for your money. All the tickets we found let you into home league games, though there are small differences in the number of games you see, depending on the size of the league. At some clubs the ticket includes entry to a few cup games – seven in the case of Arsenal, none for the other English clubs.

In some countries, prices can be cheaper than those we quote. While English Premiership grounds are all-seater, following the Hillsborough tragedy, you can still stand in Germany. A standing season ticket for Bayern Munich is £84.

Don Foster, Liberal Democrat Shadow Sport Secretary, has been running a campaign for three years for lower season ticket prices. He says: 'For some time, consumers have been getting a raw deal on football tickets from top-flight clubs. Now the clubs are awash with an unexpectedly large amount of TV cash, it's time that fans were rewarded for their loyalty.'



Fans of Chelsea – last year's Premiership champions

The Premier League said clubs were individual businesses and prices were their decision. However, it added that clubs in the top flight have spent £2bn on the quality and safety of the stadiums, which they own.

Ticket prices have not put off fans of top clubs and season tickets are hard to get. You may have to become a member (£25 Chelsea, £27 Manchester United) to go on a waiting list. Further down the league, some clubs have had problems filling grounds. Bolton Wanderers has said this is one reason it has reduced prices by 10 per cent on average. Other clubs have also cut the cost – Blackburn Rovers by 25 per cent on average. Chelsea and Arsenal have frozen prices for next year.

Exchange rates (26 March) £1 = €1.43

**'It's time that fans were rewarded for their loyalty'**

## Our verdict

Following top English football clubs is expensive. The trouble of course is that there isn't a cheaper option – fans aren't going to switch teams just to save money. Some clubs have started to take action by freezing or reducing prices for next season and this is a welcome move.

