



ALBUQUERQUE INTERNATIONAL
BALLOON FIESTA
The World's Premier Balloon Event

Presented by

Canon

2017 Media Planner



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Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. This Media Planner will help you to plan for your trip and coverage of the event or help guide you when developing a story, if you are unable to visit Albuquerque for this year's Balloon Fiesta.

We look forward to working with you. If you have any questions after reviewing this, please reach out to our media team at media@balloonfiesta.com.

Schedule of Events

Saturday, October 7

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show

6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol Show, presented by Route 66 Casino Hotel & RV Resort

6:30 a.m. Krispy Kreme Morning Glow

6:45 a.m. Opening Ceremonies

7:00 a.m. Mass Ascension, presented by Canon

2:00 p.m. America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race Inflation

6:00 p.m. Twilight Twinkle Glow™

6:00 p.m. America's Challenge Balloon Race Launch

7:45 p.m. Laser Light Show

8:00 p.m. AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show, presented in part by the Albuquerque Journal

Sunday, October 8

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show

6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol Show, presented by Route 66 Casino Hotel & RV Resort

6:30 a.m. Krispy Kreme Morning Glow

7:00 a.m. Mass Ascension

9:00 a.m. Fiesta of Wheels Car Show, located on Launch Field

11:00 a.m. Balloon Fiesta Pin Trading (Group Tour Tent)

6:00 p.m. Balloon Glow

7:45 p.m. Laser Light Show

8:00 p.m. AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show, presented in part by Albuquerque Journal

Monday, October 9 Propane Day presented by Airgas, an Air Liquide company

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show

6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol

7:00 a.m. Balloons Launch

8:00 a.m. Competition Flying begins

Tuesday, October 10

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show

6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol

7:00 a.m. Balloons Launch

8:00 a.m. Competition Flying begins

Wednesday, October 11

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show



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6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol, presented by Route 66 Casino Hotel & RV Resort

6:30 a.m. Krispy Kreme Morning Glow

7:00 a.m. Flight of the Nations Mass Ascension

8:00 a.m. Competition Flying begins

Thursday, October 12 KIDS' DAY

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show

6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol

7:00 a.m. Special Shape Rodeo™

8:00 a.m. Competition Flying begins

6:00 p.m. Special Shape Glowdeo™

7:45 p.m. Laser Light Show

8:00 p.m. AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show, presented in part by Albuquerque Journal

Friday, October 13

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show

6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol

7:00 a.m. Special Shape Rodeo™

8:00 a.m. Competition Flying begins

6:00 p.m. Special Shapes Glowdeo™

6:00 p.m. Laser Light Show

8:00 p.m. AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show, presented in part by Albuquerque Journal

Saturday, October 14

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show

6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol presented by Route 66 Casino Hotel & RV Resort

6:30 a.m. Krispy Kreme Morning Glow

7:00 a.m. Mass Ascension

11:00 a.m. Balloon Fiesta Pin Trading (Group Tour Tent north of Main Street)

1:00– 5:00 p.m. Music Fiesta™

6:00 p.m. Night Magic™ Glow presented by Canon

7:45 p.m. Laser Light Show

8:00 p.m. AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show, presented in part by Albuquerque Journal

Sunday, October 15

5:45 a.m. Laser Light Show

6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol Show, presented by Route 66 Casino Hotel & RV Resort

6:30 a.m. Krispy Kreme Morning Glow

7:00 a.m. Farewell Mass Ascension

Updated Events [Found Here](#)



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Events Inside the Park

[Dawn Patrol Show](#)(October 7, 8, 11, 14 & 15)

The Dawn Patrol Show is not only beautiful but practical. The Dawn Patrol began at Balloon Fiesta in 1978. Dawn Patrol pilots take off before sunrise and fly until landing sites become visible, giving other balloonists an idea of wind speeds and direction at different altitudes. On Mass Ascension days, the Dawn Patrol puts on a show with a choreographed inflation and launch set to music.

[Krispy Kreme Morning Glow](#) (October 7, 8, 11, 14, and 15)

A tradition established in 2010, balloonists will participate in a morning balloon glow. Immediately following the launch of the Dawn Patrol Show, a “baker’s dozen” balloons will light up the field with a balloon glow. They will then launch with the rest of balloons on the field at sunrise.

[Mass Ascensions](#) (October 7, 8, 14, and 15)

A breathtaking premier morning event, the Mass Ascensions feature hundreds of colorful hot air balloons launching to the skies in two waves. The dazzling and vibrant show can last up to two hours.

[America’s Challenge™](#) (October 7)

America’s Challenge™ Gas Balloon Race was first held at the Balloon Fiesta in 1995. Gas balloonists come from around the world to Balloon Fiesta Park to participate in the event, the team that flies the longest distance wins. Team information forthcoming.

[Special Shape Rodeo™, Glowdeo™](#) (October 12 and 13)

The most whimsical of all flying events, the Special Shape Rodeo™ and Glowdeo™ were started in 1989 and showcase captivating airborne works of art that include a penguin, frog, owl, fish aquarium and much more. Balloons take to the air for the Special Shape Rodeo™ and during the Glowdeo™ balloons stay grounded and inflate, giving Balloon Fiesta guests an up close and personal view.

[Twilight Twinkle Glow™, Balloon Glow & Night Magic Glow™](#) (October 7, 8 and 14)

Highly anticipated events, the Twilight Twinkle Glow™, Balloon Glow and Night Magic Glow™ light up Balloon Fiesta Park. Just before dusk, balloons are inflated and tethered, the Balloonmeister then orders ignition and the burners fill the balloons and the sky with a kaleidoscope of brilliant colors. Guests can walk amongst the balloons and take in the brilliance. The magnificent tradition, started in 1979, comes to a close with a spectacular laser show and fireworks show.

[AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show](#)(October 7, 8, 12, 13 and 14)



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After the launch field is clear of balloons, on scheduled evenings, the AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show begins. Guests interested in seeing the fireworks show should arrive in time for the evening's balloon event.

Flight of the Nations Mid-Week Mass Ascension (October 11)

This special ballooning event highlights the international flair of Balloon Fiesta; Flight of the Nations showcases all of the participating countries during a mid-week flight. Each country will be represented by selected pilots carrying their country's flag in the flight that precedes the mid-week Mass Ascension. This year there will be 20 countries represented at Balloon Fiesta.

Laser Light Show (October 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15)

The laser show, in its third year at Balloon Fiesta, will take place each day during the morning and evening sessions. The shows will feature straight beams shooting out across the Launch Field, images projecting onto balloons and will be choreographed to music played over the PA system.

[Judge Declared Goals](#)

A competition where balloon pilots must fly to designated targets one mile away from the launch field. This event tests even the best pilots' skills. Judge Declared Goals may occur during the weekday morning flying events.

[Fly-in Task](#)

Ranging from drop heights of only inches to 200-feet above the ground, even the most talented balloon pilots are challenged when it comes to fly-in tasks. Pilots must drop a weighted marker on a specified target within Balloon Fiesta Park. Variations of these tasks are demonstrated in competitions like Balloon Fiesta Golf and Minimum Double Drop. Fly-in Tasks may occur during the weekday morning flying events.

[Key \(Prize\) Grab a.k.a. Ring Toss](#)

Definitely one of the most difficult competitions, the Ring Toss is one of the most popular and exciting to watch and compete in. Balloons launch from at least one mile away and fly to the field, once there, pilots must navigate to one of five tall poles. Each ring is worth a fabulous prize if the pilot can place it over one of the poles. The Ring Tosses occur during morning flying events.

[The Gondola Club](#)

The Gondola Club is a reserved area with special parking, private seating, delicious food and private bathrooms just for members. The Gondola Club is located at the southwest corner of the launch field. For more information or to purchase tickets contact the Balloon Fiesta office at 505.821.1000 or 888.422.7277.

[The Chasers' Club](#)



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Chasers' Club members receive access to the Chasers' Club Hospitality area including the outdoor "Chase Lounge," both located at the north end of the launch field. Delicious beverages, pastries and hot food are available to Chasers' Club members. Guests can also purchase alcoholic beverages from the Chase Club bar. Guests pay an additional fee for access to the Chasers' Club.

Main Street

A thrilling one-third mile of food, merchandise and exhibits await Balloon Fiesta guests on Main Street. A foodie's dream—Main Street has it all; from traditional New Mexican cuisine to festival favorites. Guests of all ages will enjoy learning about the history and sport of ballooning at the Balloon Discovery Center, also located on Main Street.

Getting To the Park

[Admission](#)

General admission tickets for all balloon sessions will be available at the Balloon Fiesta Park entrance gates, online at www.balloonfiesta.com and the Balloon Fiesta office for \$10. Children 12 years and younger are FREE when accompanied by an adult. No refunds are available, but tickets for cancelled sessions may be used for future sessions.

Advance admission tickets are available in packs of five (5) as a Five-Session Ticket for \$45, a \$5 discount. An All-Session Parking Pass is available for \$100. View maps of the Balloon Fiesta Park for directions, parking information and getting around the Park. These items can be purchased at Balloon Fiesta offices during normal business hours.

[Music Fiesta™](#), occurring October 14 and beginning at 1:00 p.m., provides different levels of access. Premier Lawn Seating is available for \$25; reserved seats are \$60 if purchased on the day of Music Fiesta™ at the gate. Advance tickets are available on the [Balloon Fiesta website](#) for \$20 for Premier Lawn Seating and \$50 for reserved seats. Guests who are 12-years-old and younger do not need a ticket for the Premier Lawn Seating, but all guests sitting in the reserved seats must have a ticket. Guests who attend Music Fiesta™ can stay and enjoy that evening's Night Magic Glow and AfterGlow fireworks.

[Parking](#)

Parking is \$15 per vehicle per session. Parking passes and packages are available from the Balloon Fiesta office or can be purchased online. There are no in and out privileges. General parking lots are located on the north, east and south ends of the Park. Each parking lot is color-coded and the gates are numbered, so please remember the color and number of the gate through which you entered the field. The Park opens at 4:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. for the evening session.

[Bike Valet](#)



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Balloon Fiesta guests who enjoy riding bikes have access to free parking, an easy access bike trail and safe storage at the south end of the Launch Field next to the Albuquerque International Balloon Museum. Bike Valet is staffed by volunteers from Bike ABQ, NM Touring Society and City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Bike Safety Program. Cyclists can take the bike trail that runs along the AMAFCA North Diversion Channel that crosses underneath Paseo del Norte and Alameda, ending just north of the Balloon Museum, in the Bike Valet parking station. Balloon Fiesta Bike Valet hours of operation: Morning Sessions: 5:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.; Evening Sessions: 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Bike Valet is available all Balloon Fiesta sessions.

[Fiesta Express Park & Ride](#), sponsored by Visit Albuquerque

There are five convenient locations available for Balloon Fiesta guests to park their car and get a bus ride to Balloon Fiesta Park. Balloon Fiesta guests that opt to arrive by way of Park and Ride should arrive at parking lots early to ensure that they will arrive at Balloon Fiesta Park in time for planned events. Tickets include admission into the park. Advance tickets are priced: Adults \$15 (13-61), Seniors (62 & Older) \$12, Children (6-12) \$7, children 5 and younger are free. Tickets are available at the remote lots at a higher price. There are NO CASH sales at the remote lots. Pricing, locations, schedules and discounted tickets are available online at <http://www.balloonfiesta.com/guest-guide/park-ride>. There is no Fiesta Express Park & Ride service on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday but traffic is usually lighter those days and there will be plenty of parking.

[Fiesta Express Park & Ride Locations:](#)

Eastside: Hoffmantown Church, Cliff's Amusement Park and Coronado Mall (southwest corner near San Pedro)

Westside: Cottonwood Mall (northeast parking lot)

[Raincheck Policies](#)

General Admission Tickets: Retain the ticket for re-admission in the event the session is cancelled.

Gondola Club Tickets: Once your order has been processed there are no refunds. Your ticket may be used as a raincheck for general admission to an alternative session. The Gondola Club does not close if a flying event has been cancelled. It is still open and attendable for the buffet and entertainment.

Park & Ride: No weather refunds. Present your original ticket at the remote lot to purchase a bus only ticket for \$10.00 to ride to the park for another session.

[Balloon Rides](#)

Taking a balloon ride during the most celebrated ballooning event in the world is truly a once in a lifetime experience. Rainbow Ryders is the official Balloon Fiesta ride company and the only company from whom guests can purchase a balloon ride from Balloon Fiesta Park during Balloon Fiesta. Rainbow Ryders: 800.725.2477, www.rainbowryders.com.



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[Travel and Hotel Reservations](#)

The Balloon Fiesta website has plenty of travel tips and hotel suggestions on its website – www.balloonfiesta.com.

[RV Travel](#)

RVing is one of the major components of Balloon Fiesta, every year thousands of joyful RVers occupy the Balloon Fiesta Park RV section. Balloon Fiesta Park gladly welcomes RVers, for more information call 888.422.7277 or 505.821.1000.

Visitor Information

Between Balloon Fiesta sessions there is a lot to see and do in Albuquerque. For more information, reach out to Visit Albuquerque and the New Mexico Department of Tourism.

Visit Albuquerque

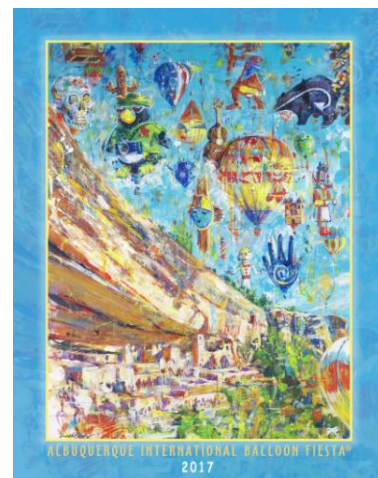
800.284.2282 www.visitalbuquerque.org

New Mexico Tourism Department

505-827-7400 www.newmexico.org

[Balloon Fiesta Official Poster Series](#)

The 2016 Balloon Fiesta Poster is by artist David V. Gonzales. Gonzales is a native of Santa Fe, NM, and has spent his life painting works that explore his heritage, rich in Native American and Hispanic cultural traditions. Being selected for this year's official Balloon Fiesta poster is a highlight in his career as an artist, Gonzales says, which started at the age of 17 when Mr. Gonzales' art was displayed in the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. He subsequently received the New Mexico Governor's Award as well as a full scholarship to the San Antonio Art Institute. Upon finishing his studies, he went on to pursue a variety of different art styles using a multitude of mediums.



Check out this behind-the-scenes look into the development of the poster and what served as his inspiration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gO87-tOvOpE>

To get a copy of this year's poster go to www.balloonfiestastuff.com.



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About Balloon Fiesta

The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is an event internationally recognized as the sport's premier event and is produced by a private, non-profit corporation.

In its 46th year, the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta event has brought a sense of fun and adventure to Albuquerque and the world that is unmatched. It has grown from a quaint launch of 13 balloons in 1972 to the massive nine-day celebration it has become today. During Balloon Fiesta, guests can expect to see about 500 balloons participating in early morning Mass Ascensions, enchanting Special Shape balloons filling the skies and in the evening, 200 balloons light up the evening sky with Balloon Glows and spectacular fireworks. Gas balloons launch at dusk to the strains of the team country's national anthem, floating slowly up and away competing in a distance competition. All of the balloons launch from Balloon Fiesta Park, a 78-acre grassed field – the size of 56 football fields – that serves as the launch field for all flying events.

Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta Mission Statement

To conduct the world's premier ballooning event, while promoting the sport of ballooning, the City of Albuquerque and the State of New Mexico, nationally and internationally.

Balloon Fiesta Board of Directors

The Balloon Fiesta is managed throughout the year by a volunteer board of directors of 24 members. In addition to event planning, they address complex policy, administrative, safety and traffic issues. Each year, the board elects officers; the 2016 Officers are President Jay Czar, Vice-President Ty Young, Secretary Matt Guthrie and Treasurer Richard (Dick) Rice.

Directors include JR Allison, Ray Bair, Gary D. Bennett, Chuck Clark, John Davis, Barbara Fricke, Jim Garcia, Steve Komadina, M.D., Cheryl Lété, Rod May, Tom McConnell, M.D., Frank A. Mezzancello, Judy Nakamura, Mike D. Rice, Doug Schwebach, Harry T. Season, Jr., John Sena, Mark Sullivan, Al Tetreault, Bill Walker.

The Balloon Fiesta Board members work tirelessly behind the scenes; it is a tremendous commitment, requiring more than wearing the official Balloon Fiesta jacket. Our community is fortunate to have such dedicated neighbors who are committed to providing the City, the State, the country and the world the greatest ballooning event year after year.

[Sponsors & Economics](#)

Many of the magnificent events presented at Balloon Fiesta are due in large part to the local and national businesses that sponsor them. Balloon Fiesta sponsorships demonstrate commitment to the event and community and provide an opportunity for employees to get involved. The cost of sponsoring an event varies based upon the visibility and promotion a sponsor receives from its association with the event as well as the magnitude of the event.



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There are currently more than 165 organizations from small local businesses to international corporations that find Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta a worthwhile investment. Representing a significant portion of the Balloon Fiesta's funding, sponsors are vital to the success of the community celebration. For a complete listing of sponsors, visit www.balloonfiesta.com/sponsors or email sponsors@balloonfiesta.com.

Economic Impact

The 2016 Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta attracted an estimated 839,309 guest visits during the nine-day event. According to a 2015 [economic impact and guest research study](#) commissioned by the Balloon Fiesta, it is estimated 74 percent of visitors to Balloon Fiesta are from outside of the Albuquerque Metro area, and approximately 65 percent are from outside of New Mexico. Balloon Fiesta guests generated an estimated \$177.44 of total economic impact for businesses in the Albuquerque metropolitan area, \$105.31 million of that amount being direct economic impact. The company Forward Analytics was commissioned by the Balloon Fiesta to conduct the 2015 economic impact survey.

Media

The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is a regular favorite of local, national, and international media organizations. Over the past five years, more than [36,745 stories](#) have featured the event, our pilots, sponsors, and guests.

Working media at Balloon Fiesta are provided the opportunity for a hot air balloon ride (based on availability), complimentary parking, event entry, access to a photography tower, wireless internet access, logistical support from our professional media team, entry into the media hospitality tent and invitations to media receptions and dinners.

A Balloon Fiesta Media badge allows easy access for coverage of most official Balloon Fiesta events. Applications for credentials are accessible online and must be accompanied by a letter of assignment. Media credentials provide access to most of the areas on Balloon Fiesta Park. However, there are a few areas for which additional permission must be granted before entering. These areas include:

- **Corporate Village Tents, Fiesta Tents, Gondola Club, Chasers Club**
 - Rented by and restricted to Balloon Fiesta sponsors, guests or members.
- **Officials' Compound, Official Towers**
 - These are areas central to Balloon Fiesta flight operations. The Officials' towers include the pilot briefing tower and balloonmeister tower.
- **Public Safety Compound**
 - This area is restricted to official personnel only due to the multi-agency integration of public safety organizations.
- **President's Compound**



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- A very attractive area for reporters, photographers and videographers because of its location above the Launch Field as well as the accompanying views. Those views also make the area very attractive to the RV guests who rent the area well in advance each year. If you are provided access to the President's Compound, please be respectful of the RV guests who have paid for the location and view.
*A media committee escort is required for access to the President's Compound and a safety vest must be worn.
- **Field During Competitions**
 - During all days of flying competitions, access in the competition area requires an official media escort. Requests need to be made in advance and safety vests must also be worn on the field.

Reporters covering the event must have permission and proper vehicle identification to conduct live reports from the field.

Any special requests must be pre-approved by the Director of Media Relations.

Credentials do not allow entry into RESTRICTED AREAS for any purpose. Restricted areas include: Safety command center, fireworks staging area, propane, hydrogen refueling areas, or photographing from the top of buildings on the south end of the field.

BROADCAST GUIDELINES

All two-way, marti, microwave and satellite frequencies used to provide live coverage of the Balloon Fiesta must be registered with Balloon Fiesta Media Relations well in advance of Balloon Fiesta.

Broadcasts must not interfere with the Balloon Fiesta public address system, field operations, communications related to the safe operation of hot air or gas filled balloons and broadcasts of official media.

For local radio broadcasters, please be aware that Balloon Fiesta sponsorship agreements restrict "live" radio broadcasts to the Albuquerque market to phone reports no longer than two minutes in length when they are on the Balloon Fiesta field.

Media Tent Location – Hours of Operation – Activities

The AIBF Media Tent is located on the southeast corner of Balloon Fiesta Park, very close to the launch field. There will be no storage provided for tripods, backpacks, and equipment. The media tent schedule is as follows:

- **October 5&6:** 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. – Media Registration/Credential Pick up
- **October 6:** 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. – Media Welcome Party
- **October 7:** 5 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. & 4 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **October 8:** 5 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. & 4 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **October 9, 10 & 11:** 4:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.



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- **October 12:** 5 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. & 4 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **October 13:** 5 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. & 4 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **October 14:** 5 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. & 4 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **October 15:** 5 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

BALLOON FIESTA WEATHER

Weather is always a factor as is with any outdoor event. Balloon Fiesta's primary concern is safety when making decisions concerning cancellation or postponement. News organizations will receive any cancellation notices from the Balloon Fiesta media representative immediately after the Pilots' weather briefing approximately 6:30 each morning.

Morning Mass Ascensions/Scheduled Flying Competitions

Winds faster than 10 knots (approximately 11.5 mph), less than 3 miles visibility, clouds below 1,500 feet and rain will postpone or cancel the launch.

Evening Balloon Glows/Fireworks

Wind faster than 11.5 mph or rain will cancel or delay static illumination of inflated balloons. Fireworks can still be displayed with wind up to 20 mph.

Delay and Cancellation Process

The Balloon Fiesta will make the first announcements about any delays or event cancellations to the balloon pilots. The announcement will be made as part of regular Pilot Briefings. The initial briefing is held before each event at the Pilot Briefing Tower on the west side of Balloon Fiesta Park except the briefings for Glowdeos will be in the Pilots' Pavilion. Pilot Briefing is open for the public to listen in; please keep any conversation and radio communication to a minimum. Information will be announced and posted in the Media Tent as well as via official Balloon Fiesta text message, Twitter and Facebook accounts. Unless the weather creates a dangerous situation, Balloon Fiesta Park will remain open even in the case of a balloon flight cancellation.

Flag Pole Notifications

Because mobile phone and wireless access can be hampered with so many people at Balloon Fiesta Park, the Balloon Fiesta created a flagging system to notify guests about the status of flying events based on the color of the flag. The flag pole, located adjacent to the Stage in the center of Main Street will fly one of three flags: GREEN means all flying events are on schedule; YELLOW means flying events are on a delay or a flight decision has not yet been made; RED means flying events are cancelled for this session.

Rain Check Policy

The Balloon Fiesta offers no refunds for unused tickets. However, rain checks will be issued if an individual flying session must be cancelled due to weather or other safety considerations, and the tickets can be used for any other flying session at the 2016 Balloon Fiesta. The 2016 Music



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Fiesta™ is exempt from the Balloon Fiesta rain check policy because Music Fiesta™ is a “rain or shine” event.

Ideal Flying Conditions

Since balloons move with the air, information about the weather is imperative when deciding whether to fly. Before launching, pilots will contact one or more weather services to find out about weather and wind conditions in an area. Pilots only fly when the weather is close to ideal—when skies are clear and wind conditions are favorable.

Balloons need stable air to operate effectively and the atmosphere is most stable during the hours just following sunrise and they are the best for finding calm gentle winds. In some parts of the world this also applies to the hours just before sunset. Additionally, the temperature is usually cooler in the mornings and the balloon flies better in cooler weather since the hot air gets a better “lift”. The only control a pilot has over a balloon is vertical so they don’t want to fly around the middle of the day when different pockets of air are rising and falling.

The “Albuquerque Box”

The fall weather in Albuquerque is known for its clear days and cool morning temperatures. This weather and what is known as the Albuquerque “box” will help this year’s Balloon Fiesta to become another spectacular spectator event. When the “box” is working, guests are able to see hundreds of balloons create a kaleidoscope of color in the Albuquerque sky – there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world.

The “box” is a combination of upper and lower level winds created by the Rio Grande Valley and enhanced by the Sandia Mountains. The box enables balloonists to back-track their flight pattern and land close to their launch sites conjuring the impression of flying inside a box. Cool air from the north near the surface will take pilots one direction while higher winds blow in the opposite direction. Pilots need only to change elevation to fly back along their original course. Some wind patterns will allow a pilot to dip their gondola in the Rio Grande for a “Splash and Dash” other patterns will move balloons toward the Sandia Mountains.

This unique relationship of mountain formations and wind characteristics has brought many balloonists back to Albuquerque year after year to enjoy beautiful ballooning weather. This “box” allows the hundreds of balloons that lift off from the field during Balloon Fiesta’s Mass Ascensions to remain close to the field, creating a colorful visual display found nowhere else in the world.

The Science of the “Albuquerque Box”

This wind pattern for which the Albuquerque area is well known occurs under stable conditions during the fall season when no strong weather systems are affecting the area. A local study found that on average the “box” circulation occurs 30 percent of the time in early October. Even on



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days when the "box" occurs, it dissipates by mid-morning as the sun heats the ground, resulting in thermal turbulence which mixes the separate layers of air and eliminating the low level inversion.

During the nighttime hours, the air near the ground surface is cooled by the process of radiational cooling. This process is most efficient with clear skies, low humidity, and light wind. Cooler, and therefore denser air flows downslope and pools at lower elevations along arroyos and river valleys. The cool air that pools in the Rio Grande valley is shallow (generally no more than a few hundred feet in depth). During the early morning hours this air flows southward down the valley from higher to lower elevation much as any fluid flows downhill. A north wind generally less than 10 mph results in the middle Rio Grande Valley.

The stable "river of air" occurs below a temperature inversion which separates it from warmer, less dense air above the inversion, just as vinegar is separated from oil by differences in density. The wind direction in the air mass above the shallow inversion can be different than that below the inversion. In an "ideal" box pattern, the wind blows in exactly the opposite direction with a north wind at the surface and a south wind above the surface. A skillful pilot can bring a balloon back to near the point of takeoff by changing altitudes to ride wind currents in different directions. Upon takeoff the pilot first heads south towards downtown, then ascends higher where the winds will then take the balloon back north towards Balloon Fiesta Park.

BALLOONING HISTORY

The first gathering to watch a flying machine began in France in 1783, in part to satisfy the curiosity of the Montgolfier brothers, Joseph and Etienne. The two enterprising paper manufacturers entertained the King and Queen of Versailles, along with a crowd of 40,000 people, by sending aloft a smoke-filled balloon carrying as passengers a duck, a rooster and a lamb.

The first human passengers (Pilatre de Rozier and Marquis d'Arlandes) were carried aloft some 3,000 feet in the first manned, untethered balloon flight ever recorded on November 21, 1783. Two weeks later, a Frenchman, J.A.C. Charles and his friend, Monsieur Robert, launched a hydrogen gas balloon near Paris for a two-hour, 27-mile flight.

One year later, the first hot air balloon ascent in the United States occurred when a 13-year-old boy, Edward Warren, ascended over Baltimore in a tethered hot air paperballoon.

All through the 19th century, American ballooning featured two different types of aerostats. For lengthy flights, hydrogen or "mixed gas" was preferred. For rapid, briefer ascents, smoke-filled balloons proved to be more viable. During the Civil War, balloons were used for spotting and reconnaissance and occasionally were used to carry the U.S. mail and aerial photography.



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In 1859, John Wise (with three passengers) inflated his gas balloon “Atlantic” in St. Louis and flew eastward in an attempt to cross the Atlantic Ocean. After an 800-mile adventure, a severe storm forced him to land in Henderson, New York.

The next aerostat flight of any importance was also the same year. A huge balloon of rubberized silk with a 725,000-cubic-foot hydrogen capacity was inflated by “Professor” Thaddeus Lowe, a balloonist. His balloon, “The Great Western” (originally called the “City of New York”), suffered a major tear in the crown caused by deterioration from weather exposure and too much handling, immediately before launch.

Two years later in a smaller balloon “*Enterprise*,” Lowe flew from Cincinnati over the Appalachian Mountains, landing in South Carolina where startled officials arrested him for being a Yankee spy.

For the next 100 years, very little progress was seen in the world of ballooning. A few would-be aeronauts performed tethered ascensions at state fairs around the country.

One such ascension occurred in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1882. Saloon keeper P.A. Van Tassel owned and operated a balloon called the “*City of Albuquerque*.” It was highly touted as an attraction for the 4th of July celebration on the Territorial Fairgrounds. After numerous delays to his much talked about “lift off,” Van Tassel’s craft finally reached an altitude of 14,207 feet and flew over the Rio Grande River before it came to rest in a cornfield near the Fairgrounds.

There were other similar adventures, but nothing of real historical significance until 1906. At that time, James Gordon Bennett, Jr., publisher and owner of the *New York Herald*, organized the Gordon Bennett Cup Race. The first trophy was won by an American aeronaut, Frank P. Lahm, and his co-pilot Henry Hersey, who flew their balloon 395 miles from Paris to Whitby, England.

In 1907, a Chicagoan, Joseph A. Blondin, came to Albuquerque, and attempted to inflate a 25,000 cubic foot balloon envelope of rubberized silk. His “mixed-gas” three-hour flight was fraught with problems, as was another attempted ascension by Blondin in 1909.

A mild amount of interest persisted for many years, but it wasn’t until 1960 that a steady interest in ballooning began. Hot air balloon manufacturing firms began “popping up” in the U.S., most of them in the west and southwest. During the next decade, various balloon flight records for altitude, distance and duration aloft were set by several pilots, among them Ed Yost and Don Piccard.

In 1971, Albuquerque’s Sid Cutter celebrated the 42nd anniversary of his family’s flying service company and his mother’s birthday, with a Raven balloon inflated as a centerpiece in the Cutter Flying Service hangar. This family social event has become a part of ballooning history because



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of its impact on the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta which was first organized as a 13 balloon rally the following year.

In February 1973, the first World Hot Air Balloon Championship was held in Albuquerque and again in 1975 before it was shifted to other sites in Europe and the U.S.

In 1978, well-known Albuquerque balloon adventurers Ben Abruzzo and Maxie Anderson, along with Larry Newman piloted the first balloon ever to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Their helium filled balloon, the Double Eagle II, landed on August 17th in Miserey near Paris, 137 hours and 6 minutes after leaving Presque Isle, Maine.

In January of 2015 gas balloon pilots Troy Bradley and Leonid Tiukhtyaev, the “Two Eagles” team completed their 7,000-mile journey across the Pacific from Japan to Mexico, surpassing the previous distance record (5,209 miles) for gas balloons.

Today, the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta has expanded to an over 500 balloon event, with more than 700,000 guest visits over the course of nine days.

NP--FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT HOT AIR AND GAS BALLOONS

WHAT ARE HOT AIR BALLOONS MADE OF?

The bag – or envelope, as it’s more properly called – is made of a reinforced fabric called rip-stop nylon. Polyester and other fabrics are sometimes used. The materials are very lightweight and very strong. The fabric is coated on the inside to prevent leaks. The fabric used at the lower portion of the balloon is a fire resistant material like Nomex, which is what firemen and race car drivers wear.

HOW IS A HOT AIR BALLOON INFLATED?

During the inflation process, ballooning becomes a group sport. Since a balloon is quite unwieldy on the ground, it takes about four people to get a balloon inflated. Of course, the more people there are the more fun you can have. To start off, the envelope is stretched out on the ground and attached to the basket, which is lying on its side. A small gasoline-powered fan blows air into the balloon envelope. Then the burner is turned on, and the air in the balloon is heated. The hot air rises, lifting the balloon upright.

WHAT ARE THE BASKETS MADE OF?

The baskets are usually woven out of wicker since it is strong, lightweight and flexible. Wicker is also very easy to maintain and holds up well under the stress of repeated landings.

HOW BIG ARE HOT AIR BALLOONS?



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The typical sport balloon ranges in size from 65,000 to 105,000 cubic feet in volume, and when inflated stands around 70 feet tall (or equivalent in height to a building with seven floors).

HOW DO BALLOONS FLY?

Hot air balloons fly because hot air rises. When the pilot heats the air inside the envelope, it becomes lighter than the air around the envelope and floats up into the sky. The pilot can control the balloon's altitude by adjusting the temperature of the air inside the envelope. To make the balloon come down, the air inside the balloon is allowed to cool. To climb, more heat from the propane burner is added, increasing lift.

HOW DO YOU STEER THE THING?

Strictly speaking, you don't. The balloon goes where the wind takes it. However, the winds at varying altitudes may blow in different directions and at different speeds, so the trick is to climb or descend to an altitude where the wind is blowing the direction you want to go.

HOW FAST DOES A BALLOON GO?

As fast, or as slow, as the wind. Since the balloon has no forward propulsion system, its speed is determined entirely by the speed of the wind. That's why balloon races are events of accuracy, not speed.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO FLY A HOT AIR BALLOON?

Conditions are usually the best just after sunrise and one or two hours before sunset. This is the time of day when winds are calmest and the air most stable.

HOW HIGH DO HOT AIR BALLOONS FLY?

Most balloon flights occur between 500 and 2,000 feet above the ground. But balloons can fly at treetop level or go much higher. The world record for altitude in a hot air balloon is 65,000 feet.

HOW LONG CAN A HOT AIR BALLOON STAY UP?

It depends. Normally, the balloon carries enough fuel to remain aloft for two hours, but factors like outside air temperature, weight being carried in the basket, and weather determine the duration of the flight.

WHAT KIND OF FUEL IS USED FOR A HOT AIR BALLOON?

Propane is the most common fuel, but butane is sometimes used in remote areas where propane is not available. The fuel is carried in aluminum or stainless steel tanks that range from 10 – 25 gallons in size. The average fuel consumption for a sport size balloon is about 15 gallons an hour.

HOW DO YOU GET THE BALLOON BACK?

With the help of friends who drive a van or pickup truck. This chase crew is usually in contact with the pilot by means of two way radios, and follows the flight of the balloon (as well as the



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existing roads allow) and should be on hand to make the recovery when the balloon touches down.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GAS BALLOON AND A HOT AIR BALLOON?

A gas balloon is completely enclosed and is filled with helium or hydrogen gas. A hot air balloon gets its lift from heating the air within. Hot air balloon flights usually last about an hour, while gas balloon flights can last for days. Gas balloon flights require much more preparation for cold weather, high altitudes, and flying at night. Gas balloonists also pack enough food and water for several days.

HOW DO YOU ARRANGE FOR A RIDE IN A HOT AIR BALLOON?

Reservations for a hot air balloon ride can be made with Rainbow Ryders Inc., the official ride concessionaire for the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. The Rainbow Ryders tent is located near the North end of the field and near Gate 9. For reservations, call: 1-800-725-2477.

Story Ideas

- Albuquerque Aloft – over 100 balloons launch from select Albuquerque and Rio Rancho schools prior to the start of Balloon Fiesta.
- Best proposals at the Balloon Fiesta
- Cost to buy and operate a balloon
- Craziest memories/events from the balloon fiesta
- Favorite special shapes
- Fireworks shows and the people behind them
- Flying Competitions
- History of ballooning in Albuquerque
- Games for balloonists
- How special shapes balloons are manufactured
- How a balloon is built
- Why Albuquerque for the Balloon's? -Weather
- How ground crews get the field in shape and ready
- Launch field watered with recycled water
- 78-acre field – size equal to 56 football fields
- Meteorologists
- Montgolfier Diplome – the most distinguished ballooning award
- New/foreign pilots
- Official photographers
- Oldest/newest sponsors
- Oldest/newest food vendor
- Oldest/youngest pilot
- Oldest/youngest volunteer



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- Prizes and competitions
- RV cities on and near Balloon Fiesta Park during Balloon Fiesta
- Safety – what it takes to make a safe Balloon Fiesta on the ground and in the air
- Smallest/largest balloon
- World records set at Balloon Fiesta
- X Marks the Spot landing spaces
- Zebras – personalities and responsibilities

GAS BALLOONING

- Differences and similarities between the America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race and the round-the-world flights
- Emergency planning
- Gas Ballooning and how it is evolving
- Online live tracking system
- Ground chase crews
- How gas balloons work
- How a gas flight differs from a hot air flight
- How gas races are scored
- The costs of buying and operating a gas balloon
- Pilot biographies
- Tracking station operations, support operations in weather