

2019 America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race

Team Bio

Team number: 7

Crew Nationality: France

Balloon Name: *Marie Marvingt*

Balloon Registration: F-PALL

Pilots:

Name	Benoît Pelard	Name	Benoît Péterlé
Hometown	Heillecourt, Lorraine, France	Hometown	Thionville, France
Occupation	Retired hotelier/restaurateur	Occupation	Safety officer
Aircraft ratings/flight hours	Began flying hot air balloons in 1989 and gas balloons in 2000, has 1,200+ hours	Aircraft ratings/flight hours	1,200+ hours; got his hot air balloon rating in 1997 and gas balloon rating in 2008.
America's Challenge race history	3 (2015, 2016, 2017), finished fourth in 2016	America's Challenge history	1 (2017)
Gordon Bennett history	10 (2009-2018), crewed for the French team which competed in Albuquerque in 2008. Best finish: 6 th in 2011. Finished 7 th in 2018.	Gordon Bennett history	9 (2010-2018), finished 5 th in the 2013 race and 7 th in 2015 and 2018.
Other notable flights/records	In 2010 flew from Nancy in France to Sissinghurst, Kent, England in a 100 th anniversary recreation of the 1906 flight of Marie Marvingt, known as La Fiancee du Danger and the catalyst behind air ambulance service.	Other notable flights/records	With Benoît Pelard and Laurent Lajoie, in 2010 flew from Nancy in France to Sissinghurst, Kent, England in a 100 th anniversary recreation of the flight of Marie Marvingt.
Awards:	One of the co-organizers of the 2014 Coupe Gordon Bennett in Nancy; chairman of the French ballooning federation.	Awards:	

Comments: In 2016, Benoît Pelard and his co-pilot Laurent Lajoie captured everyone's imagination by flying a route seldom taken in the America's Challenge, to Arizona. They hoped to fly over the Grand Canyon, and while they didn't get quite that far, had a great view of the Painted Desert and were warmly welcomed by members of the Navajo (Diné) nation when they landed on the reservation. In 2017 the team flew across the Midwest and enjoyed a great view of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway before landing east of Indianapolis. Benoît Pelard has been to Albuquerque and the Balloon Fiesta several times, beginning in 1989. He crewed for the French entry in the 2008 Gordon Bennett.

Benoît writes that the fascination of gas ballooning is "flying in silence, being suspended in midair underneath our small bubble of gas. Time seems to stop." He got hooked on ballooning in 1986, when the competitors in the French national hot air balloon championships stayed in his hotel.

Benoît Péterlé has competed internationally for several years, and while he's flown most of his races with Benoît Pelard, he had his best result in 2013 when the two Benoît's competed separately. He got his start in gas ballooning at the 2004 Gordon Bennett, held in his home town. During that race he crewed for Albuquerque's Richard Abruzzo and Carol Rymer Davis, who won the race that year, and still fondly remembers his encounters with Richard in 2004 and at the 2010 Gordon Bennett. Benoît enjoys "Flying with no worries about time, taking time for himself, watching earth from the sky."

Benoit and Benoît built their balloon, *Marie Marvingt*, themselves. They have flown it in nine Gordon Bennett races, and this year's America's Challenge will be its fourth flight in the United States.