

New Tracking System Expands America's Challenge Experience

Posted 9/30/19

This year, competitors and fans alike will enjoy a new, more reliable and robust tracking system for the balloons participating in the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta's America's Challenge gas balloon race. The new system provides additional data and features to add to the excitement as the teams fly across America, trying to achieve the greatest distance from Balloon Fiesta Park in Albuquerque.

The system is the product of YB Tracking, and is used for a variety of cross-country events, including auto, yacht, snowmobile, and endurance races and rallies, and extreme sports and expeditions. For the past three years, this tracking system has been used for the world championships of distance gas ballooning, the Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett.



The YB tracking system uses the Iridium satellite network to track the balloons, a more reliable method than the ground-based system the America's Challenge has used since its earliest years. The tracking devices carried by the balloons are much smaller and lighter and can transmit signals from the most remote locations, enhancing pilot safety and viewing enjoyment.

With the advent of the new system, the America's Challenge rules will now allow for reporting of the competitors' altitudes, as well as distance and duration. Since balloons steer and vary their speed by changing altitude to find favorable winds, this will add a new dimension for armchair aviators following the race.

To access live tracking:

--Visit the Balloon Fiesta America's Challenge website, <https://balloonfiesta.com>, and visit our live tracking page, which includes official race updates as well as the balloons' current positions.

--Download the YB Tracking app to your favorite mobile device, available on all the major app stores. Then click on "add races," and click on the Balloon Fiesta – it's free!

Features available on the tracking map:

--Mouse over any balloon to see current speed, names of the pilots, time the position was recorded, current latitude/longitude, current altitude, current distance recorded, status, and current rank.

--Click on any balloon to reveal a timeline and altitude profile of the team's flight. You can click on multiple balloons to view and compare multiple tracks (up to four at a time).

--The side menus allow you to view a list of teams and their status, along with the color of their track, as well as a leaderboard showing the race order, time of the last tracker hit, and distance and duration. You can also view social media posts related to the Balloon Fiesta and the America's Challenge.

--The top menus allow several options for viewing, including zooming in and out and isolating certain portions of the map. There are also a variety of available map overlays, including a latitude/longitude grid, day/night overlays, wind profiles, terrain, satellite, topographic, and hybrid views, and a ruler for measuring straight-line distance.