



FLYING IS GREAT “INSIDE THE BOX”

ALBUQUERQUE, NM—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 to this year’s Balloon Fiesta another spectacular spectator event. When the “box” is working, visitors are able to see hundreds of balloons creating 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 his 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.

Gas balloonists are also drawn to Albuquerque’s weather. The gas balloon has an enclosed cell that contains helium or hydrogen. While hot air balloons usually float only a few hundred to a thousand feet above Albuquerque, the gas balloonists often fly several thousand feet above the ground and attempt to reach faster winds at higher elevations. Because altitude is not controlled by heating the air, pilots use navigation, elevation and strategy to use the weather patterns that have taken them as far as Canada and the eastern seaboard of the United States. The America’s Challenge Gas Balloon Race is scheduled to launch from Balloon Fiesta Park on Saturday, October 3rd at 6:00 p.m.

The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is ballooning’s largest and most spectacular event attracting hundreds of thousands of guest visits each year. This year’s event will feature more than 600 hot air and gas balloons flying over Albuquerque.