



MEDIA GUIDE

2026 ExxonMobil Albuquerque
International Balloon Fiesta®





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and tag #BalloonFiesta



Visit [BalloonFiesta.com](https://www.BalloonFiesta.com) for the latest event schedule, tickets, maps, hotels, and more.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Welcome to the ExxonMobil Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, a spectacular gathering of color, courage, and community. This year we celebrate not only the skyward beauty of hundreds of balloons lifting over the Rio Grande Valley, but also two remarkable milestones: our nation's 250th anniversary and the 100th anniversary of Route 66. Together, these anniversaries remind us of freedom, exploration, and the iconic journeys that helped shape our country and our region.

This year's Fiesta programming will honor Route 66's centennial with special displays and tribute flights celebrating the Mother Road's legacy through Albuquerque. We commemorate those who had the sense of adventure to travel by car along this storied route — and those who had the courage to step into a woven wicker basket powered by a fabric envelope of hot air to participate in one of the earliest forms of flight.

I am proud to stand beside my fellow Board of Directors, AIBF staff, and the more than a thousand volunteer Navigators who present this event to the world. Welcome to the City of Albuquerque, the State of New Mexico, and the United States of America for the 54th ExxonMobil Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta.

With soft landings,
Neil Jackson
President of the Board



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On behalf of myself and the staff at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, welcome, and thank you for joining us for the 54th ExxonMobil Balloon Fiesta®!

Each October, the world's eyes turn to Albuquerque as hundreds of balloons fill our skies in a celebration unlike any other. While the breathtaking spectacle captures attention, it is the people, traditions, and community that make this event truly extraordinary.

As members of the media, you play an invaluable role in sharing these stories with audiences around the globe. Your coverage highlights not only the beauty and sport of ballooning, but the dedication of our pilots and crews, volunteers, sponsors, public safety partners, and the individuals who work year-round to make this event possible. We are grateful for your partnership in showcasing the spirit of Balloon Fiesta and the hospitality of Albuquerque and New Mexico.

This year is especially meaningful as we celebrate America's 250th anniversary and the centennial of Route 66. These milestones reflect a shared legacy of adventure, innovation, and discovery – values that have defined Balloon Fiesta since the beginning and continue to inspire us today.

Thank you for being part of this celebration. We look forward to working with you and wish you a safe, successful, and unforgettable Balloon Fiesta.

Julie Morgas Baca
AIBF Executive Director



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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

7:00 a.m. Balloons Aloft (*at local schools*)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3 | EXXONMOBIL DAY

5:45 a.m. Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m. Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol Show
6:30 a.m. Krispy Kreme Morning Glow
6:55 a.m. Opening Ceremonies
7:00 a.m. Mass Ascension
8:00 a.m. Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
10:00 a.m. Chainsaw Carving Auction
3:00 p.m. Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
5:00 p.m. Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
6:30 p.m. Twilight Twinkle Glow™
7:30 p.m. Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
7:45 p.m. Drone Light Show
8:00 p.m. AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4

5:45 a.m. Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m. Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m. Dawn Patrol Show
6:30 a.m. Krispy Kreme Morning Glow
7:00 a.m. Mass Ascension
7:30 a.m. Fiesta de los Globitos (RC Balloons)
8:00 a.m. Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
9:00 a.m. Fiesta of Wheels Car Show
10:00 a.m. Chainsaw Carving Auction
11:00 a.m. Balloon Fiesta Pin Trading
3:00 p.m. Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
5:00 p.m. Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
6:30 p.m. Balloon Glow™
7:30 p.m. Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
7:45 p.m. Drone Light Show
8:00 p.m. AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5 | NEW MEXICO DAY

5:45 a.m.	Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m.	Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m.	Dawn Patrol Show
7:00 a.m.	Balloon Launch
8:00 a.m.	Fly-In Competition
8:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6 | COCA-COLA DAY

5:45 a.m.	Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m.	Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m.	Dawn Patrol Show
7:00 a.m.	Balloon Launch
8:00 a.m.	Fly-In Competition
8:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

5:45 a.m.	Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m.	Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m.	Dawn Patrol Show
6:30 a.m.	Krispy Kreme Morning Glow
7:00 a.m.	Flight of the Nations Mass Ascension
7:30 a.m.	Fiesta de los Globitos (RC Balloons)
8:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

5:45 a.m.	Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m.	Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m.	Dawn Patrol Show
7:00 a.m.	Special Shape Rodeo™
7:00 a.m.	Balloon Launch
8:00 a.m.	Fly-In Competition
8:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
10:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Auction

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8 (CONTINUED)

3:00 p.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
5:00 p.m.	Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
6:30 p.m.	Special Shape Glowdeo™
7:30 p.m.	Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
7:45 p.m.	Drone Light Show
8:00 p.m.	AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9 | KIDS' DAY *sponsored by Chick-fil-A*

4:30 a.m.	Kids' Day Goodie Bag Distribution
5:45 a.m.	Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m.	Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m.	Dawn Patrol Show
7:00 a.m.	Special Shape Rodeo™
7:00 a.m.	Balloon Launch
7:30 a.m.	Fiesta de los Globitos (RC Balloons)
8:00 a.m.	Fly-In Competition
8:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
10:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Auction
3:00 p.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
5:00 p.m.	Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
6:30 p.m.	Special Shape Glowdeo™
7:30 p.m.	Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
7:45 p.m.	Drone Light Show
8:00 p.m.	AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10 | EXXONMOBIL DAY

5:45 a.m.	Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m.	Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m.	Dawn Patrol Show
6:30 a.m.	Krispy Kreme Morning Glow
7:00 a.m.	Mass Ascension
8:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
10:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Auction
11:00 a.m.	Balloon Fiesta Pin Trading

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10 (CONTINUED)

3:00 p.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition
4:00 p.m.	Music Fiesta™ – Nathaniel Krantz
5:00 p.m.	Team Fastrax™ Skydiving
5:30 p.m.	Music Fiesta™ – Dasha
6:30 p.m.	Night Magic™ Glow
6:30 p.m.	Fiesta de los Globitos (RC Balloons)
7:30 p.m.	Music Fiesta™ – Russell Dickerson
9:00 p.m.	Drone Light Show
9:15 p.m.	AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

5:45 a.m.	Drone Light Show
6:00 a.m.	Pilot Briefing
6:00 a.m.	Dawn Patrol Show
6:30 a.m.	Krispy Kreme Morning Glow
7:00 a.m.	Farewell Mass Ascension
8:00 a.m.	Chainsaw Carving Exhibition

Balloon Fiesta is a weather dependent event. The safety of guests, pilots, and crews comes first when making operational decisions.

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS!

EXXONMOBIL, TITLE SPONSOR

Saturday, Oct. 3 and 10 Mass Ascensions and Glows

SANDIA RESORT & CASINO

Drone Light Show

ROUTE 66 CASINO HOTEL AND RV RESORT

Dawn Patrol Show

ACCIDENT INSURANCE COMPANY INC.

Team Fastrax

DUKE CITY REDI-MIX

Special Shape Rodeo™

NEWS RADIO 770 KKO

Farewell Mass Ascension

CITY OF LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO

Fiesta de los Globitos

2026 Balloon Fiesta Media Guide

EVENTS INSIDE THE PARK

PILOT BRIEFING, every morning at 6:00 a.m.

Provides an overview of the day's flying activities, event updates, a safety briefing, and a detailed weather forecast. Located on the west side of the park near the intersection of West Wind and Key Grab Roads, the briefing is open to the public.

DAWN PATROL, every morning at 6:00 a.m.

Dawn Patrol pilots take off before sunrise and fly until landing sites become visible. This flight gives the rest of the pilots an idea of wind speeds and direction at different altitudes.

KRISPY KREME MORNING GLOW

October 3, 4, 7, 10, 11 at 6:30 a.m.

Immediately following the launch of Dawn Patrol, 13 balloons (a "baker's dozen") light up the field with a morning glow. They then launch with the rest of balloons on the field at sunrise.

MASS ASCENSION

October 3, 4, 7, 10, 11 at 7:00 a.m.

Our signature morning event, Mass Ascension features hundreds of hot air balloons launching to the skies over Albuquerque in two waves. The vibrant show can last up to two hours.

SPECIAL SHAPE RODEO™ AND GLOWDEO™

October 8 and 9 at 7:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

The Special Shape Rodeo™ and Glowdeo™ showcase airborne works of art made up of well-known characters and original creations. Balloons take to the air for the Rodeo™ and remain static during the Glowdeo™.

TWILIGHT TWINKLE GLOW™, BALLOON GLOW™, AND NIGHT MAGIC GLOW™

October 3, 4, 10 at 6:30 p.m.

Our signature evening event, balloons inflate and burners fill the balloons and sky with a kaleidoscope of light and color. Guests can walk among the balloons and take in the brilliance.

EVENTS INSIDE THE PARK

FLIGHT OF THE NATIONS

October 7 at 7:00 a.m.

Flight of the Nations showcases all participating countries in a flight that precedes the midweek Mass Ascension. Balloonists representing each participating country will carry their nation's flag.

FIESTA DE LOS GLOBITOS

Oct. 4, 7, 9 at 7:30 a.m. and Oct. 10 at 6:30 p.m.

A remote-control balloon rally featuring tethered 1/4-scale model balloons, about 30 feet tall. The morning sessions feature a mini mass ascension and the evening session includes a glow.

DRONE LIGHT SHOW

Every morning at 5:45 a.m. and
October 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 at 7:45 p.m.

Over 500 drones light up the sky above Balloon Fiesta Park in a series of fun designs choreographed to music. Flown by Verge Aero, the recipient of Simon Cowell's Golden Buzzer on America's Got Talent.

AFTERGLOW™ FIREWORKS SHOW

October 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 at 8:00 p.m.

The AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show begins after the launch field is cleared of balloons.



BALLOON COMPETITIONS

Balloon Fiesta competitions are fly-in tasks, meaning balloons launch offsite (at least 3/4-mile away) and navigate to Balloon Fiesta Park. There are different types of targets based on the task called each morning.

JUDGE DECLARED GOAL

Pilots drop their markers on the X. The marker closest to the center is the best score.

THE HESITATION WALTZ

A series of Xs are laid out on the field. Pilots may choose which X to drop their marker. The markers closest to the center of each X is the best score.

MINIMUM OR MAXIMUM DOUBLE DROP

Two big triangles are laid out on the field with an X between them. Pilots must drop a marker in each of the triangles. The largest (maximum) or smallest (minimum) distance is the best score.

SID CUTTER MEMORIAL

Designed specifically for Balloon Fiesta, a small boat is placed on the field near an X. Pilots attempt to drop markers in or on the boat.

RING TOSS

In addition to one or more of the above tasks, 25-foot poles are set up on the field. Pilots attempt to ring the poles with a 14-inch plastic ring.



ADDITIONAL ATTRACTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

ARTISAN TENT

Balloon Fiesta's on-site arts and crafts show, featuring 30 talented makers showcasing jewelry, woodcrafts, pottery, textiles, small-batch specialty foods, and more. Located on the north end of the launch field.

BALLOON DISCOVERY CENTER

Interactive balloon exhibits demonstrate the principles of lighter-than-air flight with hands-on activities, simulations, and arts and crafts. Located on the north end of the launch field, guests can enjoy the Balloon Discovery Center from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

CHASERS' CLUB

A private hospitality area with catered meals and a private "Chase Lounge" offering alcoholic beverages for purchase. Chasers' Club is located on the north end of the field and tickets must be purchased in advance.

CONCIERGE PROGRAM

A private guided tour via golf cart. Perfect for first-time guests or those wanting a comfortable, convenient way to experience the event. Stops can include concessions, Artisan Tent, Balloon Discovery Center, chainsaw carvers, and more.

FIESTA SKY BOX

Private, specially outfitted shipping containers with an elevated view right on the launch field. The all-inclusive experience for groups up to 20 includes admission to the event, access to upper deck seating and grassy patio, snacks, and a host bar. Sky Boxes must be reserved in advance.

ADDITIONAL ATTRACTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

GLAMPING AND CAMP 505

The camping villages offer a picturesque view of Balloon Fiesta and are within walking distance to the launch field. Glamping offers a safari-style tent with access to private restrooms, shower trailers, and a hospitality area with grills, games, and lounge chairs. Camp 505 guests receive camping equipment, access to a phone charging station and filtered water, and a hospitality area with a fire pit and games.

GONDOLA CLUB

A premium reserved area with special parking, private patio seating, catered meals, a small gift shop, live entertainment, a host bar, and private bathrooms. Gondola Club is located at the southwest end of the launch field. Tickets must be purchased in advance and frequently sell out.

MAIN STREET

A one-third mile of food, merchandise, and interactive exhibits. From traditional New Mexican cuisine (fun fact: the breakfast burrito is believed to have originated at Balloon Fiesta) to fair favorites like turkey legs and funnel cakes, Main Street is your hub for eats, drinks, and trinkets.

OFFICIAL MERCHANDISE TENT

Located on the south end of Main Street, Balloon Fiesta's official merchandise tent features hundreds of balloon- and Balloon Fiesta-related items. Find everything from clothing and accessories to collectible pins, posters, and other souvenirs. Guests can also shop year-round at balloonfiestastuff.com.

VISITOR INFORMATION

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

Visit Albuquerque

800-733-9918 | visitabq.org

New Mexico Tourism Department

505-795-0343 | newmexico.org

TRAVEL AND HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Information about on-site accommodations, area hotels, and travel into and out of Albuquerque can be found on the Balloon Fiesta website (balloonfiesta.com) or through Visit Albuquerque at visitabq.org.

RV TRAVEL

Every year, thousands of enthusiastic RVers gather in Albuquerque for Balloon Fiesta. RV sites go on sale every January and sell out within hours. Information about on-site RV accommodations can be found at balloonfiesta.com/rvs. On sale dates and times are announced via Balloon Fiesta's official social channels and newsletter.

BALLOON RIDES

A balloon ride during the largest ballooning event in the world is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Rainbow Ryders is the official ride company of Balloon Fiesta and the only company permitted to sell balloon rides from Balloon Fiesta Park. For information and booking, visit rainbowryders.com or call 800-725-2477.

GETTING TO AND AROUND BALLOON FIESTA PARK

ADMISSION

General admission tickets are available online at balloonfiesta.com, at the entrance gates, and at the Balloon Fiesta offices (4401 Alameda Blvd. NE). Tickets are \$20 per person per session. Children 12 and younger are free. Balloon Fiesta is a weather dependent event and tickets are nonrefundable.

RAIN CHECK POLICY

Balloon Fiesta is a weather dependent event and tickets are nonrefundable.

The safety of all Balloon Fiesta guests, including pilots and crews, will always come first when making operational decisions. While October is generally ideal for ballooning in Albuquerque, less than ideal weather at or around Balloon Fiesta Park can prevent balloons from inflating.

If a session is canceled, Balloon Fiesta will rain check the session and tickets will be reactivated, valid for any remaining session in the current year.

The status of Balloon Fiesta sessions is available on the official app and on Balloon Fiesta's social media channels.

General Admission: Tickets will be reactivated and can be used for any other 2026 session.

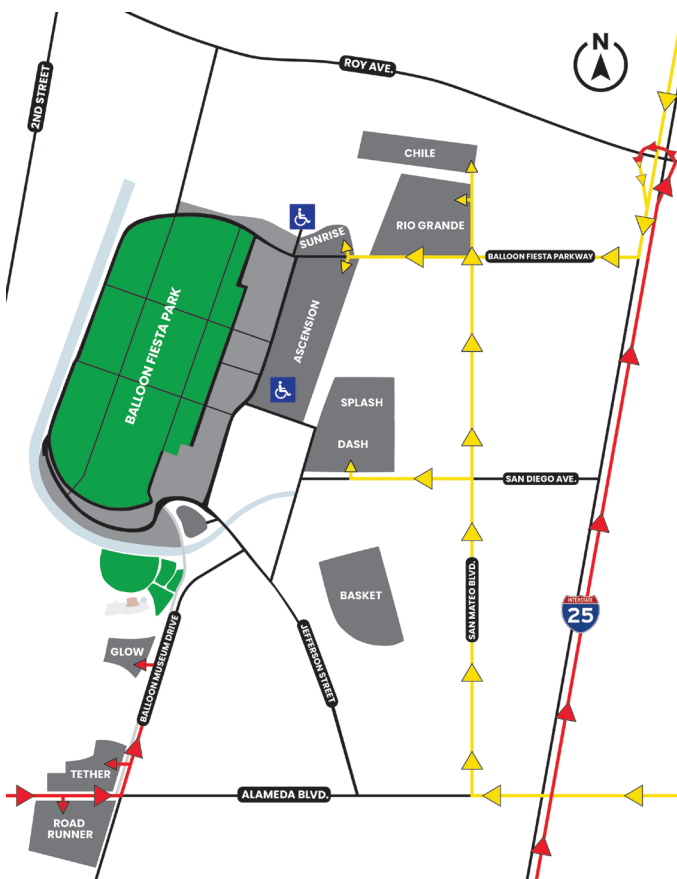
Gondola and Chasers' Clubs: Tickets will be reactivated as a General Admission ticket and can be used for any other 2026 session. Gondola Club does not close if flying events are canceled.

Park & Ride: Tickets will be reactivated as admission only and can be used for any other 2026 session. The transportation part of the ticket may not be used for another session. Bus only tickets are available for \$18.00 based on availability.

GETTING TO AND AROUND BALLOON FIESTA PARK

PARKING

Parking is \$20 (cash only) per vehicle per session. Parking lots are located to the east and south of Balloon Fiesta Park and guests are directed into available lots as they approach. Each lot is named and the gates are numbered. Guests are encouraged to note the lot name or gate number upon entry. Maps are available throughout the park to help with navigation. Parking opens at 4:30 a.m. for morning sessions and 3:30 p.m. for evening sessions.



GETTING TO AND AROUND BALLOON FIESTA PARK

PARK & RIDE

Four off-site locations are available for guests to park and ride a bus to Balloon Fiesta Park, avoiding traffic congestion. Park & Ride tickets are available online at balloonfiesta.com and must be purchased in advance. Park & Ride tickets include admission to Balloon Fiesta.

PARK & RIDE HOURS

There is no service Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday.

Morning Sessions:

to park: 4:00 a.m. and 5:30 a.m.

from park: every 30 minutes from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Evening Sessions:

to park: 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

from park: every 30 minutes from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

PARK & RIDE LOCATIONS

East Side:

Coronado Mall – 6600 Menaul Blvd. NE

Hoffmantown Church – 8888 Harper Rd. NE

West Side:

Cottonwood Mall – 10000 Coors Bypass NW

Intel (Saturday and Sunday only) – 1600 Rio Rancho Blvd. SE

BIKE VALET

With an easy access trail and safe, free bike storage, cycling to Balloon Fiesta is a great way to avoid traffic and the cost of parking. The Paseo del Bosque Trail runs along AMAFCA's North Diversion Channel (beginning at UNM and ending just south of Balloon Fiesta Park), providing easy, direct access to the park.

BIKE VALET HOURS

Morning Sessions: 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Evening Sessions: 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

GETTING TO AND AROUND BALLOON FIESTA PARK

NEW MEXICO DAY – OCTOBER 5

sponsored by New Mexico True

In appreciation of New Mexico residents' continued support of Balloon Fiesta, general admission is free for all residents on Monday, October 5. By presenting a photo ID or utility bill with a New Mexico address, residents will receive free admission for the day's sessions. Free admission does not include parking.

OFFICIAL BALLOON FIESTA APP

sponsored by Visit Albuquerque

Available in the Google Play and Apple App Stores, the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta app features an interactive park map, pilot and balloon directory, full event schedule, and more.

BALLOONFIESTA.COM

Get the latest event schedule, tickets, maps, hotels, and more. News releases and photo galleries are also available for media.

TEXT ALERTS

Sign up to receive text alerts from Balloon Fiesta during the event! Receive up-to-date information about weather conditions, flight operations, and more for each session.

Text BALLOON to 844-812-0371 to opt in.



EVENT SAFETY

Balloon Fiesta event safety coordinates a multi-agency presence at Balloon Fiesta Park, including more than 20 federal, state, and local law enforcement, first responders, and government entities. Balloon Fiesta event safety officers complement law enforcement and first responders to ensure the event is a safe place for pilots, guests, and volunteers. Event safety and law enforcement are visible throughout the park.

INFORMATION AND BEST PRACTICES FOR GUESTS

- Guests will be screened via metal detectors upon entry
- Bags and coolers will be checked before being allowed into the park (guests without bags may utilize the “express” lane)
- A Tag Your Tots station is available north of the main stage
- Have a plan should you become separated from your party
- If you see something that looks unsafe or suspicious, alert a public safety officer or Balloon Fiesta official

PROHIBITED ITEMS:

- Weapons of any kind
- Drugs and alcohol
- Glass or ceramic
- Fireworks, air horns, noisemakers, etc.
- Laser pointers
- Drones
- Skateboards, roller skates, scooters, hoverboards
- Pets/Animals (service animals permitted)

AVIATION NOTE: The airspace within a four-mile radius of Balloon Fiesta Park is covered by a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). The Federal Aviation Administration determines which aircraft are permitted over Balloon Fiesta’s airspace.

DRONES ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE BALLOON FIESTA AIRSPACE AT ANY TIME. Operating an unauthorized aircraft is a federal offense.

BALLOON FIESTA WEATHER

Balloon Fiesta is a weather dependent event. The safety of all of Balloon Fiesta guests, including pilots and crews, will always come first when making operational decisions.

News organizations receive weather-related notices from Balloon Fiesta media representatives following the Pilot Briefing at approximately 6:30 a.m. each morning.

Event updates are also available via text message (text BALLOON to 844-812-0371 to opt in) and Balloon Fiesta's official social channels. On-site updates are provided via a status flag located mid-field near the Main Street stage.

MORNING FLYING EVENTS

Winds exceeding 10 knots (approximately 11.5 mph), less than 3 miles visibility, clouds below 1,500 feet, rain, and lightning may delay or cancel flying events.

EVENING EVENTS

Winds exceeding 10 knots (approximately 11.5 mph) or rain may delay or cancel static glows. Fireworks will continue as scheduled if winds remain at or below 17 knots (approximately 19.6 mph).

DELAY AND CANCELLATION PROCESS

Balloon Fiesta officials make the first announcements about delays or cancellations at the pilot briefings held before each event. Morning pilot briefings are open to the public – please keep any conversation and radio communication to a minimum.

Updates are posted in the Media Tent and on Balloon Fiesta's official social channels.

Unless weather creates a dangerous situation, Balloon Fiesta Park remains open when balloon events are canceled.

BALLOON FIESTA WEATHER

FLAGPOLE NOTIFICATION

Balloon Fiesta employs a flagging system to notify guests about the status of ballooning events. The flagpole, located mid-field near the Main Street stage, flies one of three flags:

- Green: the launch field is open for inflations
- Yellow: events are temporarily delayed or no decision has been made
- Red: the field is closed for inflations

IDEAL FLYING CONDITIONS

Since balloons move with the wind, information about the weather is imperative when deciding whether to fly. Before launching, pilots gather all available information concerning the flight and the flight area. Pilots only fly when the skies are clear and wind conditions are favorable.

Balloons need stable wind and cooler air to operate effectively, and the atmosphere is most stable during the first hours at sunrise and the last hours before sunset.

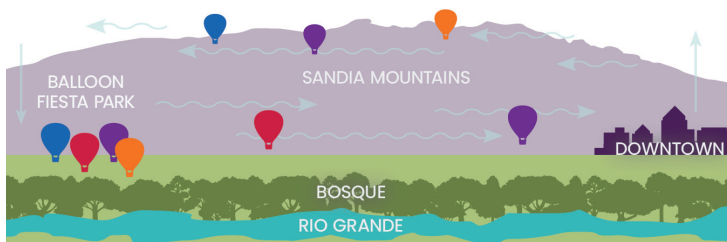


BALLOON FIESTA WEATHER



THE ALBUQUERQUE BOX

Fall weather in Albuquerque is known for its clear days and cool morning temperatures, helping create what is known as the “Albuquerque Box.” The “box” is a combination of upper- and lower-level winds created by the Rio Grande Valley and the Sandia Mountains. Cool air near the surface takes pilots one direction while winds at higher elevations take them in the opposite direction, enabling pilots to backtrack their flight pattern. This “box” allows balloons to remain close to the field, creating a colorful display found nowhere else in the world.



BALLOON FIESTA COLLECTIBLES

OFFICIAL BALLOON FIESTA PINS

Balloon pins have become a coveted Balloon Fiesta tradition. These yearly emblems are the most collected, most traded, and most talked about merchandise at the event. There are 60,000 pins sold every year, and they come in all shapes and sizes – just like the balloons they represent. There are official event pins, commemorative pins, special event pins, and collectible pins from previous Balloon Fiestas.

While many vendors sell balloon pins, the official pins are available only at the Official Merchandise tent and at the Balloon Fiesta gift shop at balloonfiestastuff.com. Official pins have the Balloon Fiesta logo on the back.



PIN TRADING

On the first Sunday (October 4) and second Saturday (October 10), Balloon Fiesta hosts pin trading sessions in the Group Tours tent at the north end of Main Street. Pin traders have the chance to meet fellow collectors from all over the world and trade from their collection for other coveted pins.

BALLOON FIESTA COLLECTIBLES

BALLOON FIESTA POSTERS

Each year, Balloon Fiesta commissions an artist to create its official serigraph poster. The serigraph process utilizes a mesh screen – stencils made with silk or synthetic mesh stretched tightly over a frame – to apply ink to various surfaces. Ink is passed through the open mesh spaces, usually with the help of a squeegee, to create a multicolored image. Each color in the design requires a separate screen and printing pass, creating individual layers. This process makes for an impressive, highly collectible piece of art.

This year's poster was created by Albuquerque painter and muralist Travis Bruce Black and celebrates the 100th anniversary of Route 66 by combining the New Mexico state bird, state aircraft, and iconic Mother Road. Black's work is held in public collections and large-scale murals throughout Albuquerque and New Mexico.

Numbered posters, signed and unsigned, can be purchased in the Official Merchandise tent and online at balloonfiestastuff.com.



MEDIA

MEDIA HOSPITALITY TENT

The media hospitality tent is located near the southeast corner of the launch field, just north of the Sid Cutter Pilots' Pavilion. The media tower is an easily recognized landmark. There is no storage for tripods, backpacks, or equipment.

Media credentials allow easy access for coverage of events and most areas within Balloon Fiesta Park. Credentials *do not* allow entry into restricted areas without an escort. Credentials are needed to access both the park and the media tent.

MEDIA TENT SCHEDULE

- October 1 & 2: Registration/Credential Pickup, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- October 2: Welcome Party, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
- October 3: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m. and 4:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- October 4: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m. and 4:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- October 5: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m.
- October 6: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m.
- October 7: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m.
- October 8: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m. and 4:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- October 9: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m. and 4:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- October 10: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m. and 4:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- October 11: 5:00 – 10:30 a.m.

MEDIA

PARKING AND VEHICLE ACCESS

Credentialed media receive parking passes as part of their credential kit. News vehicles may only access the launch field at specific times and must have proper vehicle identification and the correct passes (media parking passes only provide access to general parking areas, not to the launch field or areas inside the admission gates). Crews must have Balloon Fiesta media credentials as well as station/media identification.

Drivers of news vehicles seeking access to drive within the admission gates may be required to submit to a background check. All vehicles are subject to searches by the event safety team. Any vehicle access to the launch field or inside the admission gates must be pre-approved by Balloon Fiesta's Communications Manager.

BROADCAST GUIDELINES

Television and radio broadcasters using live/mobile backpacks (e.g., TVU and LiveU) must present the gear for inspection when picking up credentials. All two-way, marti, microwave, and satellite frequencies used to provide live coverage must be registered with Balloon Fiesta Media Relations in advance of the event.

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

Note for local radio broadcasters: Balloon Fiesta sponsorship agreements restrict "live" radio broadcasts to the Albuquerque market to phone reports no longer than two minutes in length.

MEDIA

LIVE STREAM

The Media Arts Collective (MAC) and Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) provide a clean feed of Balloon Fiesta sessions for over-the-air and cable networks on the following days:

- Saturday, October 3 – all sessions
- Sunday, October 4 – all sessions
- Thursday, October 8 – morning session
- Friday, October 9 – morning session
- Saturday, October 10 – all sessions
- Sunday, October 11 – morning session

The morning feed will begin at 5:45 a.m. and continue until all balloons have launched. The evening feed will begin at 5:00 p.m. and continue through the AfterGlow™ Fireworks Show.

The feed is available on Vimeo (vimeo.com/balloonfiesta).

RESTRICTED AREAS

- **Corporate Village, Gondola and Chasers' Club:** rented by and restricted to sponsors, their guests, and members.
- **Officials Compound and Towers:** central to flight operations, the Officials towers include the pilot briefing tower and balloonmeister tower.
- **Public Safety Command Center:** restricted to official personnel only.
- **President's Compound:** an attractive area for photographers and videographers because of its location above the launch field. Limited access may be provided by the media team.
- **Field During Competitions:** access in the competition area requires a media team escort. Requests need to be made in advance and a safety vest must be worn on the field.

MEDIA

BALLOON FIESTA LIVE!

Balloon Fiesta Live! is a live-hosted show of all Balloon Fiesta sessions, available on our website (balloonfiesta.com), Balloon Fiesta's YouTube channel, Facebook, and Albuquerque's Community Access Channel.

Anchored by Art Lloyd Jr. and Ted Maes, Balloon Fiesta Live! is the next best thing to being here in person. With multiple camera angles, Art and Ted provide expert commentary based, in part, on their personal experiences with ballooning and their friendship with many pilots and crews, while Diane Kinderwater provides on-field reporting.

Balloon Fiesta Live! first aired in 2017 and all shows are archived and available for viewing on YouTube. If you can't be at Balloon Fiesta in person, check out Balloon Fiesta Live!

MEDIA COMMITTEE

Jane Brennan

Sarah Burney

Doyle Caton

Barry Conley

Kristi Conley

Donald Engdahl

Carolyn Kitts

Stan Kitts

Kyle McConahy

Brenna Moore

Aaron Peay

Josh Peay

Xavier Wallace

Denise Winn

Dylan Winn

Mark Winn

Dave Mathews

STORY IDEAS

PILOTS, CREWS, AND BALLOONS

- First Time Balloon Fiesta Pilot / Mentorship Program
- Oldest / Youngest Pilot
- Zebras (launch directors)
- Crew Chiefs
- Landing Sites / X Marks the Spot Program
- Montgolfier Diplome (most distinguished ballooning award)

EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS

- Balloons Aloft (unofficial kickoff to Balloon Fiesta)
- Flying Competitions (and prizes)
- Dawn Patrol
- Fireworks Show / Drone Show
- Music Fiesta
- Balloon Discovery Center
- Premium Experiences
- Chainsaw Carvers
- World Records Set at Balloon Fiesta
- Breakfast Burritos, perfected at Balloon Fiesta

BALLOONS

- Special Shapes
- Cloudhoppers (balloons with no basket)
- Smallest / Largest Balloon
- Globitos (Remote Controlled Balloons)
- Balloon Manufacturers / Repair Companies

BEHIND THE SCENES

- Preparing for Balloon Fiesta – staff, volunteers, ground crews, tent city
- Vendors and Concessionaires
- Sponsors and Volunteers
- Weather and Safety Teams
- Balloon Fiesta Live!
- History of Ballooning in Albuquerque
- Balloon Fiesta Hall of Fame

GUESTS

- Wedding Proposals at Balloon Fiesta
- Memories from Balloon Fiestas Past
- Balloon Fiesta RV Life / Glamping / Camp 505

PHOTO TIPS

The ExxonMobil Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta® is one of the world's most photographed events and there are plenty of chances to create amazing images. Don't forget to charge batteries, clear memory cards, and pack a portable battery.

DAWN PATROL

We suggest using a tripod and remote for the best shots. If your lens has internal stabilization, consider turning it off. Since balloons lift off while it's still dark, a wide-angle lens is ideal.

MASS ASCENSION AND BALLOON LAUNCH

With 500+ balloons filling the sky each morning, it's hard to miss the perfect shot! Use a wide-angle lens to get photos of ground activity and balloons lifting off and floating over Balloon Fiesta Park. For detail shots and balloons in the distance, grab a telephoto-zoom lens. Don't miss the sun rising over the Sandia Mountains – the sun behind the balloons provides beautiful silhouettes.

BALLOONS IN FLIGHT

Wide-angle lenses help capture New Mexico's bright blue sky and the hundreds of balloons filling it while zoom lenses allow you to capture pilots in flight. Be sure to check out the media tower to get a view from above the crowd.

BALLOON GLOW

Balloon Glows feature coordinated illuminations throughout, making for sweeping, dramatic views perfect for a wide-angle lens. Consider setting up on the west end of the field to capture balloons set against the glowing Sandia Mountains. We recommend using a tripod and remote.

DRONE SHOW AND FIREWORKS

A tripod with remote are essential for clear shots. Consider using longer shutter speeds to capture trails of light for a more artistic approach.

ABOUT BALLOON FIESTA®

The ExxonMobil Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta® is an annual festival of hot air balloons that takes place every October in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. It is the largest gathering of balloons and balloonists in the world and is internationally recognized as the sport's premier event.

From its humble beginning of just 13 balloons in 1972 to the massive nine-day celebration it has become today, Balloon Fiesta has brought a sense of adventure and magic to Albuquerque and the world.

During Balloon Fiesta, more than 500 balloons launch in early morning Mass Ascensions and light up the night sky during tethered glows. Each morning, pilots launch from Balloon Fiesta Park, an 86-acre grass field, the equivalent of 56 football fields. On Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, some pilots launch off-site and fly toward Balloon Fiesta Park for competitive events.

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

Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc. is managed by a volunteer board of directors. In addition to event planning, board members work tirelessly behind the scenes to address complex policy, administrative, safety, and traffic issues. Board members are elected each year and board officers every two years.

2026 OFFICERS

Neil Jackson, President
Mark Sullivan, Vice President
Gary Bennett, Secretary
Jeff Lawrence, Treasurer

2026 DIRECTORS

JR Allison	Steve Komadina, M.D.
Tania Armenta	Jerry Lovato
Ray Bair	J.J. Mancini
Peg Billson	Rod May
Steve Coffing	Tom McConnell, M.D.
Jay Czar	Dick Rice
John Davis	Harry T. Season, Jr.
Barbara Fricke	Al Tetreault
Jim Garcia	Bill Walker
Matt Guthrie	Ty Young



BALLOON FIESTA STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc. (AIBF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that puts on the annual Balloon Fiesta. AIBF's small team supports its year-round efforts.

2026 STAFF

- Julie Morgas Baca, Executive Director
- Bob Bruce, Finance Assistant
- Mary Chando, RV Coordinator
- Cameron Clements, Field and Facilities Assistant Manager
- Curt Dahlquist, Field and Facilities Manager
- Jennifer Garcia, Director of Operations and Logistics / Event Director
- Shamaine Giannini, Hospitality and Community Outreach Director
- Martha Gonzales, Finance Director
- Sue Gonzales, Administrative and Operations Manager
- Erica Hahn, Concessions / Artisans / Main Street Entertainment / Music Fiesta / Tickets
- Tracey Hawkins, Community and Education Outreach Manager
- Chani Kaibetoney, Merchandise Manager
- Stephanie Kitts, Communications Manager
- Brian Lindley, Director of Transportation and Public Safety
- Cavell Miller, Administrative Coordinator
- Lisa Mulder, Merchandise Director
- Stephanie Prendergast, Sponsorship Sales and Marketing Director
- Christie Roybal, Sponsorship Sales Assistant
- Jory Slingerland, Volunteer Coordinator
- Sarah Stultz, Pilot Administrator
- Ken Tuley, Balloon Fiesta Live!

BALLOON FIESTA STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEERS

More than 3,000 volunteers, known as Navigators, help bring Balloon Fiesta to life each year. Their work begins months before the first balloon launches into the October sky, and their wide variety of skills and talents help both on the field and in the Balloon Fiesta offices.

Navigators assist with everything from answering phones and working the Balloon Fiesta gift shop to painting ticket booths and installing fencing. On-field launch directors (Zebras) also volunteer their time for nine days of ballooning to ensure the safety of pilots and guests.

Many balloon-loving volunteers have been Balloon Fiesta navigators for years and are part of the ballooning community across the world.



BALLOON FIESTA RECOGNITIONS

HERITAGE AWARD

In 2005, Balloon Fiesta established the Heritage Award to honor and recognize individuals who have made a significant impact through preserving the organization's history, promotion, communication, or other innovations that have helped achieve the mission statement. Each year, the awardee is recognized with an official pin.

2026 HERITAGE HONOREE:

FRANK MEZZANCELLO, JR.

Frank Mezzancello, Jr. was a long-time Balloon Fiesta Board member and a key figure behind the development of today's Balloon Fiesta Park.

He tirelessly pursued projects to make the ballooning atmosphere more fun. As the head of the Entertainment Committee, Frank helped bring in many national acts and championed the expansion of the fireworks display.

During his time on the Board, Frank chaired the Field Committee and was involved with City and State representatives to acquire the land now known as Balloon Fiesta Park.

Frank was elected Board President in 1994 and spearheaded the first pilot hospitality tent, which has since become the Sid Cutter Pilot Pavilion.

Frank served on the Board for 32 years and was voted into the Hall of Fame in 2004. As a family man and passionate balloonist, Frank built a legacy for his family and his community to enjoy.



SCAN FOR A COMPLETE LISTING
OF HERITAGE HONOREES

BALLOON FIESTA RECOGNITIONS

HALL OF FAME

In 1983, the Hall of Fame was created to honor those who have made substantial contributions to the success of Balloon Fiesta and/or the sport of ballooning. Each year a new inductee is announced during the awards ceremony held on the last Saturday of Balloon Fiesta.

PREVIOUS INDUCTEES



SCAN FOR A COMPLETE LISTING
OF HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES
(1983 – 1999)

SCAN FOR A COMPLETE LISTING
OF HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES
(2000 – present)



SPONSORS AND ECONOMICS

SPONSORS

Many Balloon Fiesta events are made possible due in large part to businesses and organizations that sponsor them. Balloon Fiesta sponsorships demonstrate a commitment to the event and community and provide an opportunity for employees to get involved.

Sponsorship costs vary based on visibility and promotion the sponsor receives. There are more than 100 organizations, from small local businesses to international corporations, that contribute to Balloon Fiesta's success.

For a complete listing of sponsors, visit balloonfiesta.com. For sponsorship opportunities, email sponsors@balloonfiesta.com.

FINANCING BALLOON FIESTA

Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc. (AIBF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It hosts a world-renowned, nine-day hot air ballooning event each October and operates as a self-sustaining entity, reinvesting all revenue back into the event. AIBF is managed by a volunteer board of directors and a full-time staff of 21. Each year, the organization raises more than \$7 million to produce the event. Funding comes from five primary sources: sponsorships, ticket sales, merchandise sales, vendor/concession fees, and RV space rentals.

SPONSORS AND ECONOMICS

ATTENDANCE AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

The 2025 Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta attracted an estimated 851,994 visitors over the nine-day event.

Per a 2024 economic impact report, 85% of Balloon Fiesta guests came from outside New Mexico. Balloon Fiesta generated an estimated \$216.33 million in total economic impact for businesses in the Albuquerque metropolitan area.



FACTS AND FIGURES

2026 THEME: THE SCENIC ROUTE

Each year, Balloon Fiesta introduces a new theme which is reflected in merchandise, collateral, and more. The Scenic Route invites you to slow down, look around, and appreciate the journey as much as the destination. For 100 years, Route 66 has invited travelers to explore, wander, and enjoy the road *less rushed*. This year, we celebrate the spirit of curiosity, connection, and adventure made possible by the Mother Road.

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

There are 17 countries represented at the 2026 Balloon Fiesta. International balloonists are celebrated on Wednesday, October 7, during the Flight of Nations, an event that honors all participating countries. Balloons represent their home countries by carrying their flag to begin the Mass Ascension.

CONCESSIONS, MERCHANDISE, AND VENDORS

Balloon Fiesta's Main Street features one-third of a mile of concession space. From breakfast burritos to green chile cheeseburgers and Balloon Fiesta souvenirs to handmade arts and crafts, be sure to take a stroll down Main Street and experience all that Balloon Fiesta has to offer.



BALLOON FIESTA BY THE NUMBERS

Hundreds of balloons. Thousands of volunteers. Nearly a million spectators. The numbers behind Balloon Fiesta paint the picture of an event unlike any other, where every statistic represents a tradition that's been soaring for decades.

208
LAUNCH SITES

78
ACRES OF GRASS

54
YEARS OF FIESTA



850,000 
ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE

110
VENDORS

FOOD

MERCHANDISE

ARTISANS

189
PARK & RIDE
BUSSES

268
GOLF CARTS
AND UTVS

186
PICNIC
TABLES



1,100+
VOLUNTEERS



60,000
PINS ORDERED

BALLOONING HISTORY

The first gathering to watch a flying machine took place in France in 1783, in part to satisfy the curiosity of the Montgolfier brothers Joseph and Etienne. The two 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 a duck, a rooster, and a lamb as passengers.

The first human passengers, Pilâtre 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 13-year-old Edward Warren ascended over Baltimore in a tethered paper hot air balloon.

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

In 1859, John Wise and 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 them to land in Henderson, New York.

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

BALLOONING HISTORY

One such ascension occurred in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1882. Saloon keeper P.A. Van Tassel owned and operated a balloon called "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 anticipated "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 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 event marked the start of what ultimately became the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta.

BALLOONING HISTORY

In 1972, the first Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta was organized as a 13-balloon rally to mark the 50th anniversary of local radio station KOB.

In February 1973, the first World Hot Air Balloon Championship was held in Albuquerque.

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

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

Today, the ExxonMobil Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta® includes more than 500 balloons each year with more than 800,000 guest visits over the course of nine days.



1972 Balloon Fiesta

BALLOON FIESTA MILESTONES

- 1972:** First Balloon Fiesta with 13 total balloons. Events include the 1st Roadrunner-Coyote Balloon Race and the Balloonist Ball.
- 1973:** First World Championship, crowning of the Balloon Fiesta Queen, the first Mass Ascension, and the Balloon Fiesta parade.
- 1975:** Balloon Fiesta moves from February to October and from the Fairgrounds to Simms Field.
- 1976:** Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc. is established as a non-profit organization.
- 1978:** First Key Grab competition, "Natural Light" Chicken Flying Contest, balloon dances, the KODAK Film Drop, and the Blue Angels Flight team.
- 1979:** First year of the official Balloon Fiesta poster.
- 1980:** Debut of parachutists (US Navy Leapfrogs) and the Best Dressed Balloon Crew Contest.
- 1981:** Balloon Fiesta moves from Simms Field to the new Cutter Field and first gas balloon race.
- 1984:** Park & Ride debuts, plus the addition of MusicFest and a kite flying demo.
- 1986:** Balloon Fiesta makes another move to Fiesta Park with snow on the last day.
- 1987:** The first Balloon Glow.
- 1988:** Last year of the Balloon Fiesta gas race and the first commemorative coin.
- 1989:** First Special Shapes Rodeo.
- 1992:** Kodak becomes the title sponsor of Balloon Fiesta and the first large-scale fireworks display.
- 1993:** Balloon Fiesta hosts the 37th Gordon Bennett Gas Balloon Race.
- 1994:** Balloon Fiesta hosts the 8th World Gas Balloon Championship.
- 1995:** First America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race.
- 1996:** Balloon Fiesta moved to its permanent location at Balloon Fiesta Park, plus the first Dawn Patrol Show and the Savage Thomas "House Grab."

BALLOON FIESTA MILESTONES

1997: First Flight of Nations and Night Magic Glow.

1999: Balloon Fiesta hosts the 43rd Gordon Bennett Gas Balloon Race.

2000: 1,019 balloons registered, the largest number in the history of the event.

2001: First NM Challenge, launch field is grassed, President's Compound becomes available to the public, and the Balloon Discovery Center opens.

2003: Gondola Club opens.

2004: First Fiesta Challenge.

2005: Balloon Fiesta hosts the 49th Gordon Bennett Gas Balloon Race and Balloons Aloft debuts.

2006: Balloon Fiesta begins commissioning artists for the official poster and chainsaw carving debuts.

2008: Balloon Fiesta hosts the 52nd Gordon Bennett Gas Balloon Race.

2009: Chasers' Club opens.

2010: Bike Valet opens.

2011: Balloon Fiesta earns a Guinness World Record for the Greatest Hot Air Balloon Mass Ascent.

2014: First Music Fiesta, a laser light show, and opening of the Sid Cutter Pilots' Pavilion.

2017: Debut of Balloon Fiesta Live!

2018: Glamping added to Balloon Fiesta's amenities and the Concierge Program begins.

2020: Balloon Fiesta did not hold an event for the first time since its inception due to COVID-19.

2021: First Globito exhibition.

2022: Balloon Fiesta marks its 50th year.

2023: Balloon Fiesta hosts the 66th Gordon Bennett Gas Balloon Race and holds a special Balloon Glow for the Annular Solar Eclipse.

2025: An official Balloon Fiesta event, Globito Glow in the Village, was held outside of Balloon Fiesta Park for the first time.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE HOT AIR BALLOONS MADE OF?

The envelope is made of reinforced rip-stop nylon. The materials are very lightweight and strong, and the fabric is coated on the inside to prevent leaks. At the lower portion of the envelope, the fabric is a fire-resistant material like Nomex.

HOW IS A HOT AIR BALLOON INFLATED?

Each balloon requires about four people to inflate. The envelope is first stretched out on the ground and attached to the basket, which lies on its side during inflation. Next, gasoline-powered fans blow cool air into the envelope (called cold inflation). Finally, the pilot fires the burner(s), heating the air in the envelope and lifting the balloon upright.

HOW DO BALLOONS FLY?

Because hot air rises, enough heat gently lifts the balloon into the sky. Pilots control ascent by heating more air with propane burners and descent by allowing the heated air to cool or by using a variety of vents located in strategic points on the envelope to slowly release hot air. The pilot can control the balloon's altitude, speed, and direction by adjusting the temperature of the air inside the envelope.

HOW DO YOU STEER THE BALLOON?

Strictly speaking, you don't – the balloon goes where the wind takes it. Winds at varying altitudes may blow in different directions and speeds, so the trick is to adjust altitude to adjust direction.

HOW FAST DOES A BALLOON GO?

As fast, or slow, as the wind. Since balloons have no forward propulsion system, speed is determined entirely by the speed of the wind.

WHAT IS THE BEST TIME TO FLY A BALLOON?

Typically in the morning hours just after sunrise when temperatures are cooler and winds lower. Ideal winds are 10 miles per hour or less.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW HIGH DO BALLOONS FLY?

Most flights stay between 500 and 2,000 feet above ground.

HOW LONG DO BALLOONS FLY?

It depends. Normally, the balloon carries enough fuel to remain aloft for two hours. Other factors such as outside air temperature, weight, and weather determine the duration of flight.

WHAT KIND OF FUEL DO HOT AIR BALLOONS USE?

Propane is the most common fuel, carried in aluminum or stainless steel tanks that range from 10–20 gallons. The average fuel consumption for a sport size balloon is about 15 gallons an hour.

HOW DO YOU GET THE BALLOON BACK?

Pilots have a crew that helps with inflation and launch as well as recovery. The chase crew follows the flight of the balloon and is usually in contact with the pilot by means of two-way radios.

WHAT ARE THE BASKETS MADE OF?

Baskets, also called gondolas, are usually woven out of wicker since it is strong, lightweight, flexible, and easy to maintain.

HOW BIG ARE HOT AIR BALLOONS?

Typical sport balloons range in size from 65,000 to 105,000 cubic feet in volume and, when inflated, stand around 70 feet tall.

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

Hot air balloons get lift from heating the air within the envelope, making the temperature inside the balloon hotter than the air temperature outside. Hot air flights last about an hour. Gas balloons are completely enclosed, filled with helium or hydrogen (lifting) gas. Gas balloons require much more preparation for weather, high altitude, and flying at night, with flights lasting days.

WHILE YOU'RE IN ALBUQUERQUE

Visitors to Albuquerque are treated to an authentic Southwestern experience. As one of the oldest cities in the U.S. (founded in 1706), Albuquerque boasts a unique multicultural heritage and history where Native American, Hispanic, Latino, Anglo, Western and other cultural influences are a part of everyday life. Nowhere is the confluence of past and present more dramatic than here in Albuquerque, where the modern city skyline is nestled between ancient volcanoes, the beautiful Sandia Mountains and an endless blue sky.

WHAT'S NEW

Albuquerque continues to evolve through investments in hospitality, transportation and visitor experiences. Historic Route 66 properties including ARRIVE Albuquerque, El Vado, Monterey Motel, Imperial Inn and Hotel ZAZZ have revitalized Central Avenue, while new developments and entertainment offerings are transforming spaces such as Winrock Town Center. In 2026, visitors can experience the Route 66 Centennial through new attractions including the citywide Route 66 Remixed open-air public art gallery and the Route 66 Crossroads Information Station, located at 4th Street and Central Avenue where the historic pre-1937 and post-1937 alignments intersect. The first segment of the Albuquerque Rail Trail is also open in the Sawmill District, beginning a planned seven-mile pedestrian and bicycle loop connecting some of the city's most popular neighborhoods and cultural attractions. Meanwhile, the Albuquerque International Sunport's "Dream of Flight" renovation is nearing completion, with an expanded security checkpoint, new public art and locally inspired dining and retail. With nonstop service to destinations across the country and fresh experiences taking shape throughout the city, there has never been a better time to connect with Albuquerque.

WHILE YOU'RE IN ALBUQUERQUE

CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

Albuquerque is home to more than 20 museums and cultural centers, featuring everything from art and history to turquoise and nuclear science. Historic Old Town offers more than 150 shops, restaurants and galleries within a walkable plaza. Visit CisitABQ.org/culture for more.

NATIVE AMERICAN PUEBLOS

Albuquerque is the gateway to Native American pueblo culture. The state is home to 23 Native American tribes comprising 19 pueblos, three Apache tribes (the Fort Sill Apache Tribe, the Jicarilla Apache Nation and the Mescalero Apache Tribe), and the Navajo Nation, which spreads through New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. For more information, visit the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026. IndianPueblo.org 505.843.7270

HISPANIC CULTURE

Explore an extensive collection of traditional and contemporary Hispanic art or experience an outdoor concert, dance performance or film at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. Don't miss the Torreón, which houses the 4,000-square-foot "Mundos de Mestizaje," North America's largest concave fresco, celebrating 3,000 years of Hispanic history. NHCCNM.org 505.246.2261

WHILE YOU'RE IN ALBUQUERQUE

ARTS

Albuquerque's incredible arts scene offers a vibrancy and color that mirrors the city and its residents. A multitude of cultures have inspired remarkable art and architectural styles in the city—including stunning public art installations. Galleries and museums showcase a range of artistic styles, offering a thriving arts scene with exhibitions featuring visual arts technology and new media, performance poetry, jewelry and much more. VisitABQ.org/art

PERFORMING ARTS

Albuquerque is home to a thriving performing arts scene, with several venues offering tickets ranging from \$10–\$15. Albuquerque's flourishing arts community offers the chance to catch amazing live theater, dance, music, poetry and more at one of Albuquerque's many venues.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

With more than 310 days of sunshine per year and an average altitude around 5,500 feet, Albuquerque and its neighboring two-mile-high Sandia Mountains provide excellent terrain for hiking and biking in the summer, and sledding or snowshoeing in the winter. The city's location in a high-desert rift valley also lends itself to hot air ballooning, cycling, affordable golfing, rock climbing, bouldering, geocaching, bird watching, llama trekking, horseback riding and much more throughout the year. VisitABQ.org/outdoors

WHILE YOU'RE IN ALBUQUERQUE

CULINARY

New Mexican food is truly unique. The star ingredient is the chile pepper – our state vegetable. Harvested in the late summer while still green, the long, narrow peppers are served freshly roasted and peeled, or frozen for use throughout the year. Most often you'll find green chile made into a spicy sauce that's ladled over enchiladas, burritos, and stuffed sopaipillas. Red chile peppers, left on the plants to ripen to a deep garnet color, are strung into ristras to dry. These dried red chile peppers are rehydrated and pureed into a velvety smooth sauce that adorns huevos rancheros, tamales, and enchiladas – served stacked, not rolled. Our state question is “red or green?” If you want both, answer “Christmas” to order like a local.

Aside from traditional New Mexican food, the city features a diverse culinary scene, with Italian, French, Brazilian, Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese, Thai, Latin, Southern soul food, and more. Albuquerque is home to Sawmill Market, 505 Central Food Hall, Tin Can Alley, Green Jeans Farmery, Park Square Market, The Campground food truck park and the Mexican-inspired Hacienda food hall on Route 66 – making Albuquerque the food hall capital of the state. A blend of upscale establishments and casual comfort food is sprinkled throughout the city, allowing for a scene that's always deliciously accessible. VisitABQ.org/cuisine

WINE AND BEER

New Mexico is the oldest wine-growing region in the country, and area wineries offer tastings and tours. The city is also home to an ever-growing number of local microbreweries and taprooms, and the nation's first officially designated Brewery District. VisitABQ.org/wine-beer

WHILE YOU'RE IN ALBUQUERQUE

MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

ABQ BIOPARK

The ABQ BioPark is an award-winning environmental museum comprising four facilities: Aquarium, Botanic Garden, Zoo and Tingley Beach. The Aquarium houses a popular River Otter exhibit, the enhanced and updated Heritage Farm recently opened at the Botanic Garden, and the Zoo features new Asia and Australia expansions. cabq.gov/artsculture/biopark 505.768.2000

SANDIA PEAK AERIAL TRAMWAY

North America's longest aerial tramway travels 2.7 miles from the base of the Sandia foothills northeast of Albuquerque to the 10,378-foot Sandia Peak. Explore more than 100 trails for hikers of all abilities while taking in incredible views of the city below. Don't miss the most recent addition, TEN 3 Restaurant, where you can dine at over 10,000 feet. SandiaPeak.com 505.856.7325
Ten3Tram.com 505.764.8363

PETROGLYPH NATIONAL MONUMENT

More than 20,000 images are carved into rocks at Petroglyph National Monument, providing an opportunity for people today to share the cultures of those who long ago inhabited the Rio Grande Valley. The monument provides a variety of hiking opportunities from basic, nearly flat to moderate of several miles. NPS.gov/petr 505.897.8814

GOLF IN ALBUQUERQUE

Green fees are considerably less expensive on our golf courses than at comparable courses around the country. The Albuquerque area offers a plethora of public and private courses in varying levels of difficulty, several of which are on Native American land, or visit Topgolf for a more casual experience. VisitABQ.org/golf

WHILE YOU'RE IN ALBUQUERQUE

FILM PRODUCTIONS IN ALBUQUERQUE

MovieMaker Magazine consistently names Albuquerque a top place to live and work as a moviemaker. "Breaking Bad" and "Better Call Saul" have put Albuquerque in the spotlight in recent years and have drawn visitors from around the world. In addition to those productions, other recent film and TV projects include:

<i>Pluribus</i>	<i>Sicario</i>
<i>The Boroughs</i>	<i>The Avengers</i>
<i>Bands of Enchantment</i>	<i>Terminator Salvation</i>
<i>Flaming Hot</i>	<i>Transformers</i>
<i>Poker Face</i>	<i>The Book of Eli</i>
<i>Stranger Things</i>	<i>No Country for Old Men</i>
<i>Whiskey Tango Foxtrot</i>	<i>The Lone Ranger</i>
<i>Independence Day:</i>	<i>Crazy Heart</i>
<i>Resurgence</i>	...and many more!

During Balloon Fiesta, the city is a flurry of activity. After you have covered every inch of this year's event, check out VisitABQ.org/Balloon-Fiesta for additional events and activities taking place throughout the city.

Be sure to stop by the Visit Albuquerque Mobile Visitors Center, located midfield at Balloon Fiesta Park, to pick up a copy of the Albuquerque City Guide, which includes coupons to local businesses, a citywide calendar of events, and helpful information about things to do and see in the city. While there, snap a photo in the Albuquerque Frame – a giant 8-by-8-foot picture frame located midfield – with the amazing backdrop of colorful balloons. And don't miss the Visit Albuquerque "Red or Green?" and "La Ristra" hot air balloons in the skies, which celebrate the two beloved Albuquerque treasures.

For more information on all there is to do, go to VisitABQ.org or follow @VisitABQ on social media. Thank you for visiting Albuquerque!



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DID YOU KNOW?

VisitABQ.org



Recognized as one of the most culturally diverse cities in the country, Albuquerque's ethnic tapestry is reflected in its architecture, artwork, cultural centers and cuisine. Countless customs and traditions are a vibrant part of daily life in the city, making Albuquerque the cultural capital of the Southwest.

1

The Albuquerque metro area has just over **925,000 residents**.

2

The city spans 187 square miles at elevations ranging from **4,500 to 6,500 feet above sea level**.

3

The **breakfast burrito** is said to have originated at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta® in the 1970s.

4

The Sandia Mountains on the city's east side rise to more than 10,600 feet in elevation and turn a **watermelon pink color at sunset**.

5

The official New Mexico state question is, "**Red or Green?**" referring to red or green chile when ordering New Mexican cuisine. For those who want both red and green chile, tell the server, "Christmas."

6

Albuquerque is home to **more than 20 museums and cultural centers**, a **historic Old Town** area featuring more than 150 shops, galleries and restaurants, and a **nostalgic stretch of Route 66** that combines vintage and modern for an exciting visitor experience.

From balloon-filled skies to neon-lit streets, give your best shots the chance to be featured on our @VisitABQ social pages by tagging your photos with the hashtag #TrueABQ.

Did you know that the Balloon Fiesta is the world's most photographed event?

Commemorate your visit to the Fiesta with a photo inside Albuquerque's life-sized picture frame. The frame is located midfield at the Albuquerque Visitor Information Booth.



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ALBUQUERQUE

CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE