***Hot Air Ballooning***

Pictures

Hero graphic

***Links***

* History

<p> Hot air ballooning roots began in Paris, France on November 21, 1783 when the Montgolfier brothers’ paper and silk balloon carried the first two humans, Francois Pilatre de Rozier and Francois Laurent, Marquis of d’ Arlanders, in free flight. As fire was hand-fed through openings on either side of the balloon’s skirt, the two men stood on a circular platform attached to the bottom of the balloon. The flight lasted approximately 25 minutes with the balloon traveling about 5 ½ miles and reaching an altitude of at least 500 feet. </p>

<p>The first gas balloon was launched on December 1, 1783 in Paris, France by physicist Jacques Alexander Charles and Nicholas Louis Robert. Utilizing hydrogen gas, which is a lighter than air gas, the flight lasted 2 ½ hours and covered 25 miles. </p>

<p>Unlike hot air balloons, gas balloons did not depend upon fire to get them aloft and stay up. As a result, they were able to stay up longer and their altitude could be controlled somewhat easier with the use of ballast. Until the invention of powered and controlled airplane by the Wright brothers in America in 1903, gas balloons continued to be the primary mode of air travel. Not everyone could afford a gas balloon flight due to the expense and time consumption. </p>

<p>In the early days of ballooning, crossing the English Channel was considered the first step to long distance flying. The first successful crossing of the English Channel was accomplished later the same year by French balloonist Jean-Pierre Blanchard and American John Jeffries using a gas balloon. The first manned flight of a balloon in the United States occurred January 9, 1793. Coincidently, it was a hydrogen gas balloon piloted by Jean-Pierre Blanchard, the same Frenchman who was the first to cross the English Channel. Ascending from a prison yard in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the balloon ascended to about 5,800 feet. A successful landing occurred in Gloucester County in New Jersey. </p>

<p>Early in the 1900’s, the production of airships, commonly referred to as blimps, began. These cigar shaped balloons, often with a rigid frame to maintain its shape, were inflated with hydrogen gas to keep them aloft and possessed engines with propellers, as well as flaps, to control the direction and speed of flight. </p>

<p>At 420 feet long, the first large airship built was the Graf Zeppelin. It was capable of travelling 600 miles in 2 days. One of the first such ships in the U.S. was built in 1904. These large ships became the first commercial airliners. Many were made for military uses, while others had luxurious cabins for seating passengers. By 1936, such airships had become more common. The Hindenburg, built in Germany in 1936, was the most famous airship. It was 803 feet long and 135 feet wide and contained 7 million cubic feet of gas. </p>

<p> The Hindenburg caught fire and burned in less than one minute while attempting to dock in Lakehurst, New Jersey on May 6, 1937. Of the 97 persons on board, 35 were killed. Until the spectacular demise of this famous airship, such ships had exemplary safety records. Consequently, the use of such airships began to decline. Further, other hydrogen filled airships disasters caused them to gradually be phased out. After the Hindenburg disaster, helium-filled military ships were about the only airships to fly. Hydrogen was considered too dangerous. The new helium gas was very expensive and was not widely available outside the United States.</p>

<p> On October 25, 1960, Paul Ed Yost piloted the maiden flight of modern-day hot air ballooning in a balloon of 40 feet in diameter with a volume of 30,000 cubic feet. He flew 3 miles in 25 minutes employing a new self-made envelope and a new propane burner system. Thanks to this triumph, Yost is known as the father of modern hot air ballooning. </p>

<p>By 1963, sport ballooning had grown enough so that the first U. S. National Hot Air Balloon Championship event was held in Kalamazoo, Michigan. In 1964, the Nationals were held in Nevada and where remained there for 3 years. While no Nations were held in 1967-1969, in 1970 the preliminaries for the Nationals were held in Indianola, Iowa with the final event at the State Fair Grounds in Des Moines, Iowa. In 1971, the National Championship event moved to Indianola, Iowa where it remained for 18 years. Since that time, the Nationals have moved around to various parts of the country. </p>

<p>Many local ballooning clubs now hold events all over the United States. As the technology of burners and balloon envelope construction improved, ballooning continues to grow in popularity. Most sport ballooning today is done with hot air balloons. Gas ballooning has its followers, as well, but inflating a gas balloon takes much longer and the price of helium continues to make gas ballooning more expensive than hot air ballooning. </p>

<p>Balloons using a combination of helium and hot air are now used for many long distance flights, such as the around the world flight of Steve Fossett in his balloon, “Bud Light Spirit of Freedom” on June 19, 2002. This balloon was a hybrid hot air and gas balloon with two separate Helium gas cells and one hot air cell. Inflated, the balloon stood 180 feet tall with a diameter of 108 feet. Fossett launched from Northam, Western Australia in a seventh and successful attempt to be the first person to circumnavigate the globe solo in a balloon. Fourteen days, 19 hours and 51 minutes later he landed in the eastern Australian outback. </p>

<p>Gas balloons, such as NASA’s Ultra-Long Duration Balloon shown above right, provide greatly enhanced scientific research. Such balloons are used like satellites to study deep space and the Earth, but at a fraction of the cost of a satellite. NASA balloons are made of a thin polyethylene material about the same thickness as an ordinary sandwich wrap. In size they range up to 40 million cubic feet in volume and 600 feet in diameter to as tall as a 60-story building. When the experiment is complete, a radio command is sent from a ground station to separate the scientific payload from the balloon and a parachute opens and it floats back to the ground. The balloon envelope collapses and falls to the Earth. </p>

<p>A new breed of balloon called spherical helium airship, capable of serving as low-hanging satellites, are expected to become a useful weapon for national defense and also revolutionize communications technology. </p>

* **How does a Hot Air Balloon Fly?**
* **Michigan Hot Air Balloon Events**

[**Bavarian Inn’s Balloons Over Bavaria 2015**](http://frankenmuthriverplace.com/balloons)

Frankenmuth, Michigan

**May 23-26, 2014**

2015 Date: May 22 to May 25, 2015  
Frankenmuth River Place Shops

<http://frankenmuthriverplace.com/balloons>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Balloons-Over-Bavaria/177256272311930>

**Hot Air Balloon Shoot-Out**

Carson City, MI

June 5 - 8, 2014

2015 event info: tbd

[Crystal High School](https://www.bfa.net/index.php?view=venueevents&id=126%3Acarson-city-crystal-high-school&option=com_eventlist&Itemid=88889110) - Carson City

<http://www.carsoncityfrontierdays.com/1/344/hot_air_balloon_shoot_out.asp>

<https://www.facebook.com/CarsonCityFrontierDays>

**Michigan Challenge Balloon Fest**

Howell, MI

June 27 - 29, 2014

2015 event info: tbd

Howell High School complex, 1200 W. Grand River, Howell 48843

<http://www.michiganchallenge.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/balloonfestmi>

**Battle Creek Field of Flight Air Show & Balloon Festival 2015**

July 2 – 6, 2014

2015 event info: July 2 – 5, 2015, 35th Anniversary

3140 5th Avenue, Battle Creek, MI 49037

<http://www.bcballoons.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/bcballoons>

**Jackson Hot Air Jubilee**

Jackson, MI

July 18 – 20, 2014

2015 event info: tbd

Ella Sharp Park

<http://www.hotairjubilee.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/hotairjubilee>

**Metamora Country Days & Hot Air Balloon Festival**

Metamora, MI

Aug 22-23, 2014

2015 event info: tbd

Balloon launch field a few hundred yards south of the Metamora Lions Hall

<http://www.metamorachamber.org/metamoracountrydays>

<https://www.facebook.com/MetamoraCountryDays>

**1st annual Grand Rapids Balloon Festival**

Wyoming, MI

September 5-6, 2014

2015 event info: tbd

[Gordon Food Service Home Office - 1300 Gezon Parkway SW, Wyoming, MI 49509](http://www.grandrapidsballoonfestival.com/directions)

<http://www.grandrapidsballoonfestival.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/remaxofgrandrapidsballoonfestival>

**Midland Balloon Festival**

Midland, MI

September 11 - 14, 2014

2015 event info: tbd

[Midland County Fairgrounds](https://www.bfa.net/index.php?view=venueevents&id=69%3Amidland-county-fairgrounds&option=com_eventlist&Itemid=88889110) - Midland

<http://www.midlandballoonfest.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MidlandBalloonFest>

**High On Kalamazoo Balloon Fest**

Kalamazoo, MI

September 26 – 28, 2014

2015 event info: tbd

AIR ZOO in Kalamazoo/Portage, Michigan

<https://www.facebook.com/HighOnKalamazooBalloonFest>

<http://www.airzoo.org/>

* **Michigan Ride Directory**

(Alphabetical Listing)

Altitude Endeavors

<http://www.altitudeendeavors.com/hot-air-balloon-rides.html>

1255 Hunter Rdg, Battle Creek, MI  49017

Balloon Quest, Inc: Captain Phogg Balloon Rides

<http://www.balloonride.com/07hotair.htm>

2470 Grange Hall Rd, Fenton, MI 48430

Battle Creek Balloon Rides

<http://www.bcballoonrides.com/>

Fly Balloons

<http://www.flyballoons.net/>

1111 James K. Blvd, Pontiac, MI 48341

Proprietor**: Ted Gauthier**

Grand Traverse Balloons

<http://www.grandtraverseballoons.com/>

P.O. Box 6243, Traverse City, MI 49696

Proprietor: Jeff Geiger

Grass Lake Balloon Rides

<http://www.balloonridesovermichigan.com/hot-air-balloon-rides/MI/Jackson/49240/Grass-Lake-hot-air-balloon-rides.html>

Michigan Balloon Corporation

<http://www.miballooncorp.com/>

8038 Lake Wood Drive, Portage, MI 49002-5565

Proprietor**:** Ronald L. Centers

Rainbows Aloft Balloon Company

<http://www.michigan.org/property/rainbows-aloft-balloon-co/>

52092 Nancy Lane, Three Rivers, MI 49093

Renaissance Balloons

<http://www.renaissanceballoons.com/>

3800 W. Grand River Ave.,  Suite 100, Howell, MI  48855

Sky Adventures

<http://www.skyadventures.com/>

4191 Locust Valley Ln. Oxford, MI 48370

Proprietors: Dennis and Linda Kollin

Sky American, Inc.

<http://skyamericaninc.com/>

8425 Timber Crossing, Alto, MI 49302

Proprietor**:** Robert “Woody” Watson

Sky High Hot Air Balloons

<http://www.skyhighballoon.com/booking.htm>

9251 Garbow Road, Middleville MI. 49333

Proprietors**:** Doug and Karen Mills

Walloon Balloon Adventures

<http://www.walloonballoon.com/>

Wicker Basket Balloon Center

<http://www.wickerbasketballooncenter.com/>

50140 Pontiac Trail - Wixom, MI 48393

<img style="margin-left: 1175px;" src="/img/calla\_lilly.jpg" alt="Balloonists' Prayer'" width=150" height="75"></p> </p>

* **Balloon Launch Weather Criteria**

<http://www.bcballoons.com/balloons/balloon-launch-weather-criteria>

**Balloonist Prayer**

*The winds have welcomed you with softness*

*The sun has blessed you with his warm hands*

*You have flown so high and so well*

*that God has joined you in laughter*

*and set you gently back*

*into the loving arms of Mother Earth*