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I Fly Hot-Air Balloons



An Interview with Dan Saul
Conducted by Kathie Lester

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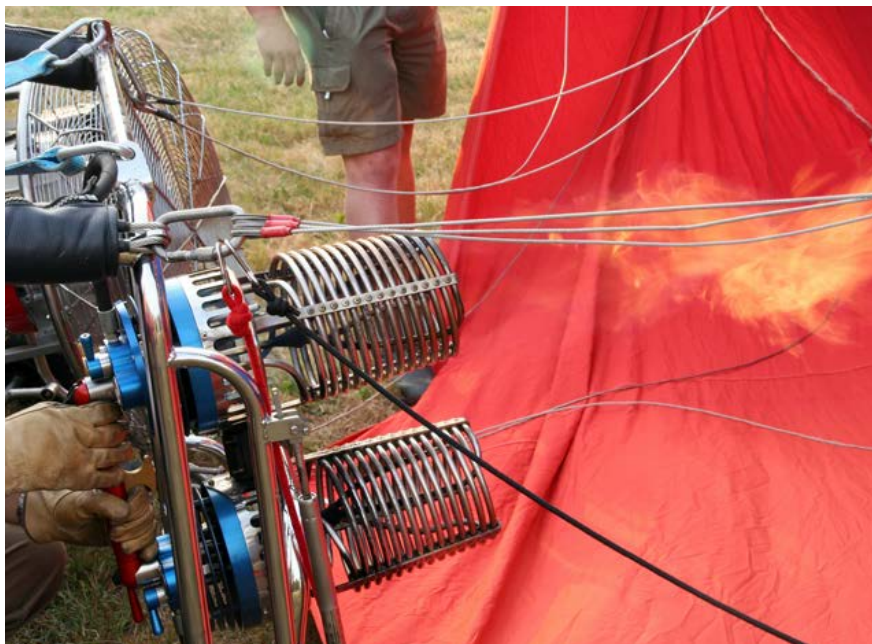


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Introduction

Flying hot-air balloons is a fun and beautiful sport. Bright balloons fly slowly and silently through the air. Dan Saul has been flying hot-air balloons since 1979.

The Balloon

Interviewer: How does a hot-air balloon fly?

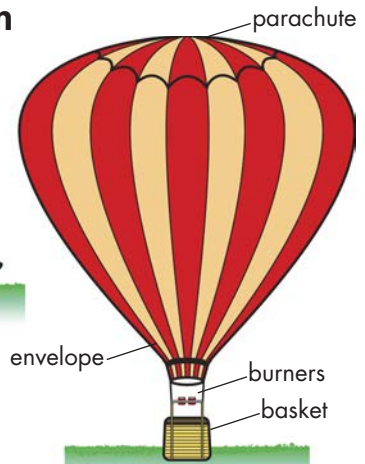
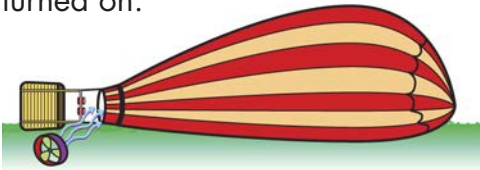
Dan: A balloon flies because it's full of hot air. Hot air rises when the air around it is cooler. The pilot blows up the balloon with a strong fan. Then a large burner heats the air inside the balloon.

Blowing Up a Hot-air Balloon

- 1 Crew members carefully spread the envelope and check to make sure nothing is twisted.



- 2 A fan starts blowing up the balloon and then burners are turned on.



- 3 Now the crew can guide the balloon to stand upright.



Do You Know?

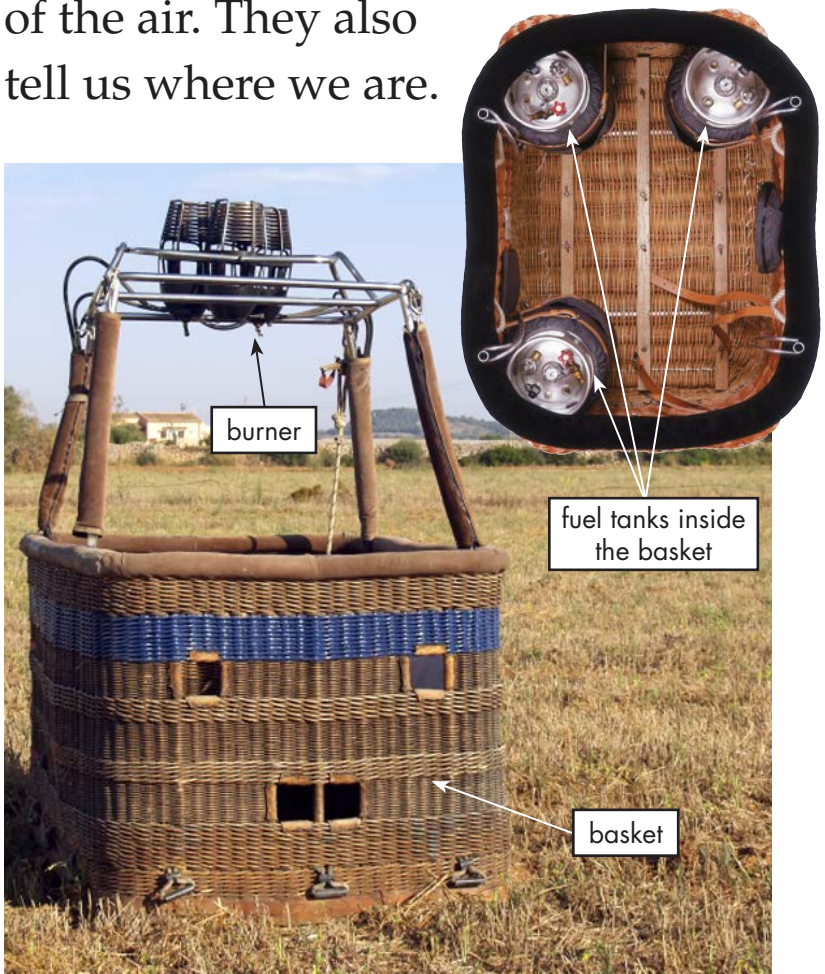
A hot-air balloon can be as big as four houses! The baskets usually carry three to five people, but they come in many sizes. There are smaller balloons built for one person. And there are big ones for up to twenty-two people.

Interviewer: What's the balloon made of?

Dan: It's made of strong **nylon that doesn't tear easily.**

Interviewer: What do you carry in the basket?

Dan: We carry **fuel** tanks, tools, and people. The tools tell us how high the balloon is and the temperature of the air. They also tell us where we are.





Flying

Interviewer: How do you steer?

Dan: The wind goes in different directions at different heights. We go up and down to find wind that goes the way we want to go. We fly just after sunrise or before sunset. That's when the winds are best.

Interviewer: How do you make the balloon go up and down?

Dan: There is a hole at the top of the balloon. We can open and close it with a cord. To go down, we open the hole to let out hot air. To go up, we close the hole.



The parachute, or center circle of fabric at the top of a hot-air balloon, opens and closes to move a balloon up and down.



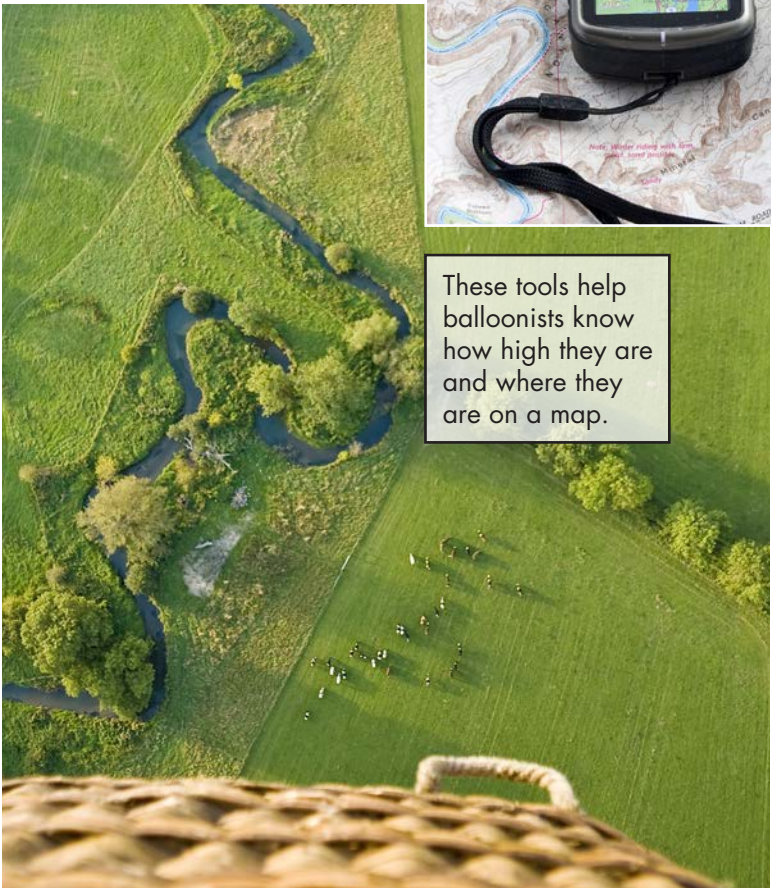
Special hot-air balloons can fly very high.

Interviewer: How high can you go?

Dan: Some people take balloons ten miles in the air. They have to wear **oxygen** tanks so they have enough air to breathe. But most stay within two miles of the surface.

Interviewer: How do you know where you are?

Dan: We use radio signals from **satellites** and then follow on a map.



These tools help balloonists know how high they are and where they are on a map.

Adventure

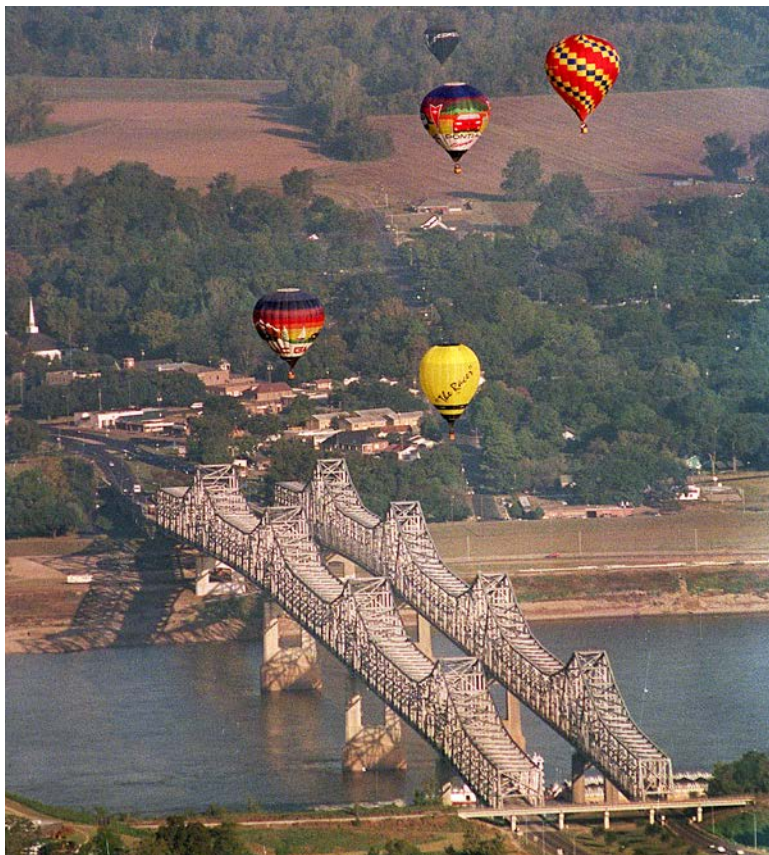
Interviewer: How did you start flying hot-air balloons?

Dan: I fixed balloons before I flew them. My first flight was so much fun that I just kept doing it!



Do You Know?

Many cities hold balloon festivals each year. Pilots come to fly their balloons, and people come to see many beautiful balloons in the air at once.



Balloons over the Mississippi River

Interviewer: What is the longest trip you ever took in a balloon?

Dan: My longest balloon trip was 55 miles. I flew right up the Mississippi River. Some people go on much longer trips.



Hot-air balloons can hover a few feet off the ground or hundreds of feet.

Interviewer: Is it dangerous to fly a hot-air balloon?

Dan: No, it's a safe sport. A balloon is like a big pillow. We make sure the weather will be good before we fly so we stay safe.

Interviewer: Are you ever scared when you fly?

Dan: No, I find it exciting. I like flying best in the fall when the leaves are different colors. The **scenery** is beautiful from high in the air.



Glossary

fuel (<i>n.</i>)	anything used to make heat or power (p. 7)
nylon (<i>n.</i>)	a strong, slippery, human-made fabric (p. 6)
oxygen (<i>n.</i>)	a gas that has no color, taste, or smell and that people need to live (p. 10)
satellites (<i>n.</i>)	objects that orbit Earth or another body in space (p. 11)
scenery (<i>n.</i>)	the features of a landscape (p. 15)

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