

# A History of Ballooning

In 1783 the scientist Pilatre De Rozier launched the first ever hot air balloon. Its passengers were a sheep, a duck and a rooster. They used a balloon made from paper and cloth. Underneath this they burned a combination of straw, chopped wool and dried horse manure. The straw would burn to release the heat and the wool would make lots of smoke to keep the flame low and prevent the balloon catching fire. The balloon stayed in the air for 15 minutes and then landed safely on the ground. In the same year, two French brothers, Joseph and Etienne Montgolfier launched the first manned balloon in Paris and stayed in-flight for 20 minutes.

Two years later in 1785 a French balloonist Jean Pierre Blanchard and his American co-pilot were the first to fly across the English channel in a hot air balloon. This was considered to be one of the first long distance balloon flights.

About 100 years passed before any further big developments in ballooning occurred. In 1960 Ed Yost made hot air ballooning practical. He built a balloon made of nylon and heated the air inside the balloon with a propane burner. He began the design of modern hot air balloons that we know today.



# Ballooning in Ireland

On 19th January 1785, Richard Crosbie made the first successful manned balloon flight in Ireland. He was just 30 years old at the time and ascended from Ranelagh Gardens in Dublin. He landed safely near Clontarf a short time later. This was a remarkable achievement occurring just fourteen months after the first ever manned flight of the Mongolfier brothers in Paris.

Crosbie also invented what he called an Aeronautic Chariot to carry his equipment, scientific instruments and ballast which he exhibited to the public charging a moderate price in order to raise much needed funds to complete his projects.

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# 53<sup>rd</sup> Irish Hot Air Ballooning Championships 2025

20th to 26th September 2025

## Spotter's Guide

at

Lough Key Forest Park,  
Boyle, Roscommon

[www.ballooningchampionships.ie](http://www.ballooningchampionships.ie)



# About the Championships

## 53rd Irish Hot Air Ballooning Championships Boyle, Co Roscommon 2025

Welcome to the Spotters Guide for the 53rd Irish Hot Air Ballooning Championships. This event is the longest running National Ballooning Championships in the world. The first championships was held in Newcastle House, Ballymahon, Co Longford in 1971. Other venues have included Waterford, Roscommon, Leitrim, Galway, Kilkenny, Meath, Cavan, Westmeath and Offaly.

Only a handful of balloons attended in the early days, but the event grew in popularity over time, as did the sport of ballooning itself. It now attracts up to 30 balloons from the USA, UK, Ireland and mainland Europe, and is an invitation only event. The biggest event of its kind in Ireland, it's an amazing spectacle for onlookers with huge colourful balloons filling the skies.

The championships first came to Boyle, County Roscommon in 1976. The event was centred in Lough Key Forest Park and brought together balloon pilots from across Ireland and overseas to compete in scheduled flights and tasks. Balloons of various designs, including the novelty shaped Club Orange Can, launched from the park and surrounding areas. The championships became a regular entry in Boyle's event calendar with the last event taking place in September 1994 following which it relocated to Kilkenny.

Flights are planned for early mornings at 7am and evenings at 5pm. They depend on the weather, it must be very calm and dry to enable the balloons to fly safely.

Updates can be found on our Facebook page [@irishballooningchampionship](#) and our new website [www.ballooningchampionships.ie](http://www.ballooningchampionships.ie)



# About Hot Air Balloons

Balloons are aircraft, regulated under the same Aviation Regulations as every other category of aircraft - planes, helicopters, gliders, etc.

Balloons are aerostats (static within the air) - once a balloon is aloft, it moves in sync with the air mass and on the breeze in which it floats.

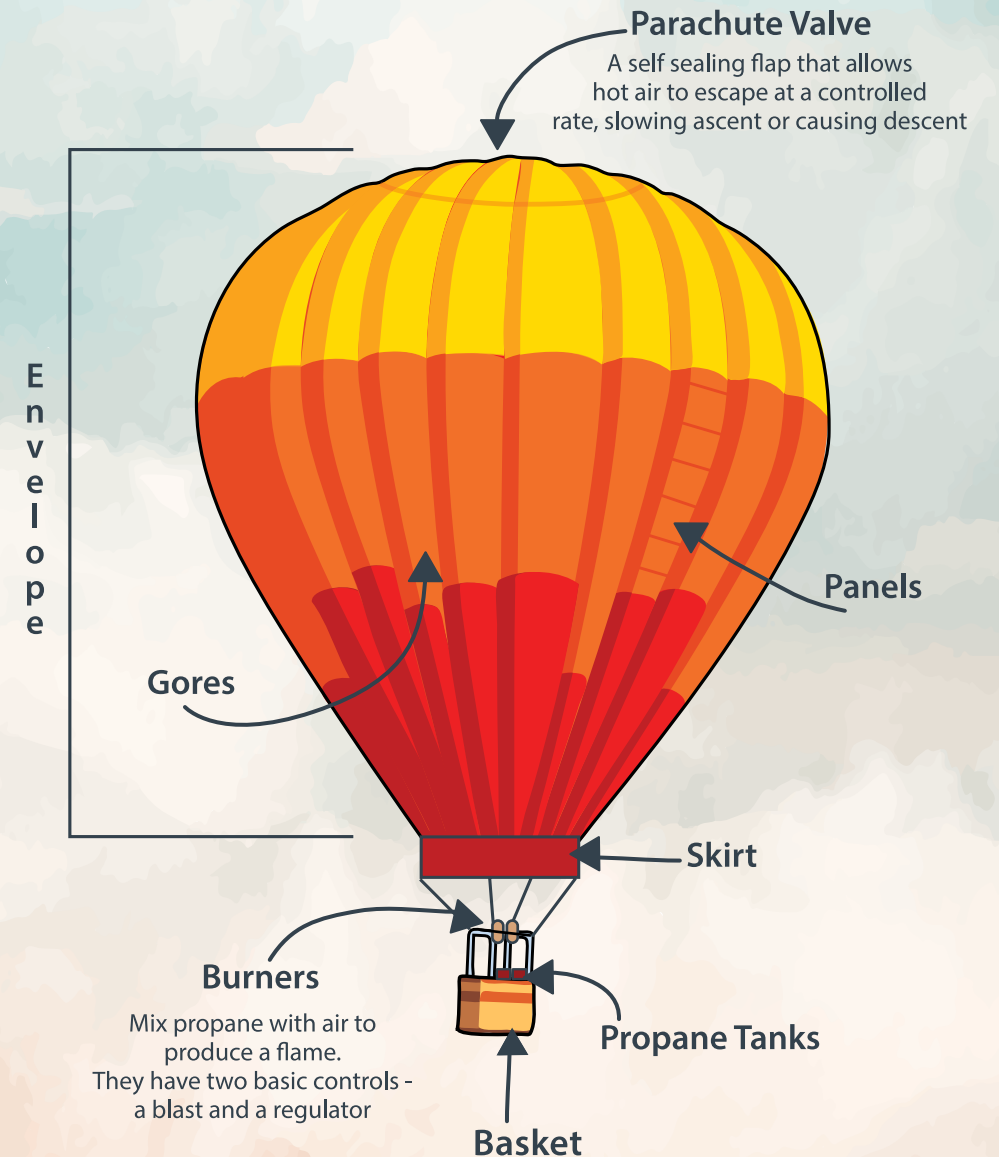
The modern hot air balloon is made up of three main parts: the envelope, the basket and the burner.

The envelope is the colourful "balloon" part and is sewn into many patterns - geometric designs and custom shapes. It is made from heat resistant, rip-stop nylon. The envelope is folded, rolled and stored in a canvas-like bag, kept in a cool dry place to avoid mildew and is continuously checked for any heat damage or tears. If well maintained, a balloon envelope should last 500 or more flying hours. Most sport balloons have a capacity within the envelope of either 2,180 cubic meters (77,000 cu ft) or 2,548 cubic meters (90,000 cu ft). That's 1,097 meters of fabric and 4.8 km of thread. The 77,000 cu ft balloon stands approx 70 feet (21m) high and 55 feet (17m) wide. That's three two story houses tall.

The wicker basket is woven with a tight, vertical weave of cane or bamboo and is well suited to resisting entanglement in branches and hard landings. A finishing urethane coating inside and out ensures the wicker will resist becoming brittle or rotten from exposure to moisture. This maintains the wicker's ability to flex, absorbing and distributing any bumps during landings. The pilot and any passengers travel in the basket. The basket contains the propane tanks and flight instruments - usually a compass, altimeter, rate of climb indicator, fuel quantity gauge and pyrometer (envelope temperature indicator).

The engine of the balloon is the burner, usually rigged on a rigid bracket (or frame) over the pilot's head and controlled by means of a hand valve. Hot air balloons use plain old air as the lifting gas.

By heating the air inside the balloon (with blasts from the burner), the pilot makes that air less dense (lighter) than the outside air, and the balloon rises. As the internal air cools, the balloon becomes heavier and descends.





# Spotter's Guide

[www.ballooningchampionships.ie](http://www.ballooningchampionships.ie)



☐ G-OWLL  
Pilot - Richard Phillips



☐ EI-HPN  
Pilot - Frank Meldon



☐ G-BGHS  
Pilot - Gareth Gray



☐ G-CLGX  
Pilot - Nigel Carr



☐ EI-FDD  
Pilot - Tom McCormack



☐ G-BYMV  
Pilot - Colin Jones



☐ G-RDEN  
Pilot - Robin Mercer



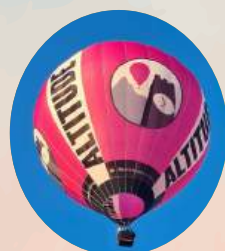
☐ G-CMXI  
Pilot - Joe Leahy



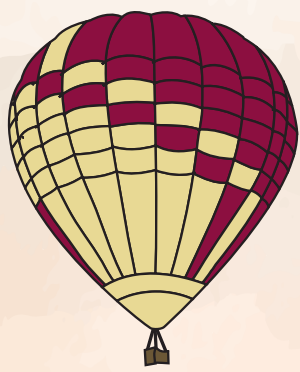
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Pilot - Joe Daly



☐ G-OALT  
Pilot - Brendan O'Rourke



☐ G-OERR  
Pilots - Carol Davis  
& Mark O'Neill



☐ G-BXWX  
Pilot - Carol Davis



☐ G-CDPN  
Pilot - Mark Stelling



☐ G-FVUK  
Pilot - John Hartley



☐ G-ITVM  
Pilot - Ian Wadey



☐ G-BVKV  
Pilot - Ian Jones



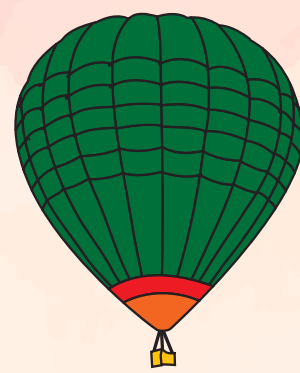
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Pilot - Malcolm Henson



☐ G-BREX  
Pilot - Tom Gourley



☐ G-RMAX  
Pilot - Paul Wade



☐ EI-DEW  
Pilot - Joseph Leahy



☐ G-DONR  
Pilot - Gareth Gray



☐ G-BLVB  
Pilot - Zack Daly



☐ G-CKVI  
Pilot - Gary Davies



☐ N14GY  
Pilot - George York



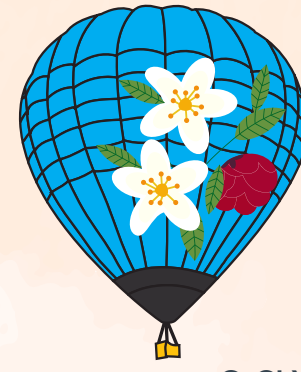
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Pilot - Rowland Benbrook



☐ G-CMNR  
Pilot - Hugh Savage



☐ G-CGOH  
Pilot - Ian Jones



☐ G-CLXE  
Pilot - Graeme Scaife



☐ EI-CRB  
Pilot - Johnny Kenny

