

Hot Air Balloon Competition Events for Spectators

A series of Hot Air Balloon Competition Events are held throughout each year to establish the team to represent Great Britain at International Events – mainly the World Championships and European Championships held in consecutive years.

Anyone is welcome to attend our events as a spectator, although we do not make provisions for the general public – so why not come along with a flask or picnic? It can be extremely exciting to watch and is quite a spectacle to see balloons flying to targets – an added dimension to fiesta or fun flights.



Typically at events, pilot briefings are held in the morning at around 6.00am and in the evenings around 6.00pm (times vary at each event during the year with sun rise and sun set times).

Briefings take up to 30mins and it is at that time that the competitors find out where they will be flying from and where the targets are set out, and if the weather is suitable for flying.

During the course of an event it is likely that some flights will be from the competition centre, and some will involve a task to fly to the competition centre – for such a task pilots will have to find their own launch site. Spectators at the competition centre could, therefore, expect to see either all balloons taking off from the same place, or the competitors flying into a target set out on the field.

Competition ballooning makes for a wonderful spectacle. Not only the beauty and majesty associated with hot air ballooning, but the thrill of flying to targets adds something special. Most competition flights last for around an hour, but this can be reduced or extended depending on wind speeds.

More and more competition pilots use racer style balloons which are narrower and more tear shaped than the traditional strawberry shaped balloons. The racer balloons are designed to climb and descend quickly, allowing the pilots to get to the required height to find the wind going in the direction they need.



Competing in Hot Air Balloons is all about accuracy, not speed or distance. The pilots are scored on how accurately they can fly to a pre-determined point where a target will be set out. Scores are gained from markers thrown from the basket to the target – the closest to the centre gains the most points. Balloons can only be steered by harnessing the winds at different heights, but many pilots now use computerised maps and GPS devices to assist in the navigation to targets.

Due to the science of ballooning, flights are weather dependant – light winds and blue skies are perfect conditions – and take place in the early morning and late evening when the air is cool and there is no thermic activity.

For further information about specific event dates and briefing times see diary and download pages at www.ballooncomps.org.uk or contact secretary@ballooncomps.org.uk

Why not contact us to get involved as an event official or observer?