

# Hello!

You have been given this leaflet because you have come into contact with a local balloonist, perhaps by watching a balloon take off, followed one as it flew, or had one land close to your home. This leaflet answers some of the questions regularly asked, and who knows, may even spark more interest.

## Q: What's the balloon made of?

A: The balloon itself (the 'envelope') is ripstop nylon, and the basket is woven from traditional wicker. Both have special strengthening features built-in, that make them safe to use for flying in.

## Q: How long do you fly for?

A: An average hot-air balloon flight is around an hour or so. It's limited by how much fuel we can carry. The distance we travel is dependant on how fast the wind is blowing. Since we tend not to set off if the wind is more than about 10 mph, then we usually travel less than 10 miles, but we might have taken the balloon a lot further than that in order to launch at a place that has no downwind restrictions.

## Q: What sort of restrictions are you talking about?

A: We try to be mindful of all aspects of our flight, and make efforts to cause as little disruption as possible to those we rely on for our sport, primarily the

landowners that we land on – for example, we prefer to avoid livestock, standing crop, controlled airspace, power stations and anywhere else that might be 'sensitive' eg race horses.

## Q: Where are your sandbags?

A: Only gas balloons need them. All the balloons in the PRBA are hot-air balloons.

## Q: What's the difference?

A: It's a different way of lifting. Hot-air balloons have burners that heat the air in the balloon's envelope to go up. As the air cools, we come down again. A gas balloon drops ballast (the sand) to go up, and lets a bit of gas out to come down.

Gas balloons are very rare. The balloon on the BBC made to look like the world was a hot-air balloon.

## Q: How do you steer it?

A: There is only limited opportunity for 'steering', but it is possible to influence the general direction of the flight by making use of different wind directions at different heights. What you do have a great deal of control over is your height, so we can make very precise decisions about when and where we land.

## Q: Can I have a flight?

A: As in other types of aviation, a balloon will be operated as either a private or a commercial aircraft. To simply pay for a ride, you need to ask if it is a commercial flight, or try Yellow Pages under balloons.

A possible alternative is to make a commitment with a private pilot to work as ground crew. This means turning out at unsocial hours to 'work your passage', but may sooner or later gain you a coveted place in the basket as reward.

## Q: Why was I discouraged from helping the crew today?

A: This was not because we don't need the help! The 2 most likely reasons why assistance is declined are:

a) (during launch) extra unexpected tension on the crown line when the pilot is inflating is actively refused (because he is unaware of it, and unable to compensate)

b) (after landing) we try to minimise the entry onto private land until the landowner has given permission for the retrieval of the balloon.

But don't let this put you off from offering to help with other jobs or waiting till we have permission.