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Ballooning Frequently Asked Questions:

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Our Answers

How do balloons fly?

Hot air balloons operate on the basic principles of gravity and heat transfer. The propane burners warm the air inside the balloon envelope to as much as 250 degrees F, thus allowing the pilot to take the balloon up to whatever altitude he or she desires. Gravity pulls us back to earth as the temperature cools down. Of course the pilot can continue heating the air to prolong the flight or to control the rate of descent.

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Why do balloons fly only in the late afternoon or early mornings?

The air is almost always at its most stable point early in the day or late in the afternoon thus giving the passengers longer rides and of course more favorable landing conditions (winds generally under 10 knots).

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How high do balloons fly?

A normally loaded passenger balloon will fly from just a few feet above the surface to as high as two to three thousand feet. The altitude can easily be controlled by the pilot.

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Is it cold up in the air?

Not much cooler than on the ground, usually only 5 to 6 degrees difference

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How can a balloon move from one place to another?

Although a pilot cannot turn a balloon right or left he or she can usually maneuver in various wind currents in several different directions thus giving the pilot a reasonable degree of directional control. One of the mysteries of balloon flight is you never know where you are going to land, that makes each flight an adventure.

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How long does a balloon flight last?

Normal flights for sightseeing are about an hour in length or 6-10 kilometers in distance depending on the particular winds of the day. The entire adventure takes about three hours from your arrival at the meeting site until you are returned to that location. If a hotel/resort pickup was included then the driving time should be added to the three hours.

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How do I obtain a ticket or reservation?

You can book over the Internet and obtain our very best price, send an e-mail or simply ring our office (see below or web site). Plus you can receive a confirmation of your slot(s) via return email. You will need to secure with a credit or bank transfer if booking from abroad. If you are purchasing a prepaid ticket for either yourself or someone else you may order it and we will mail it to you upon processing your payment. These tickets have an expiration date of one year from purchase. Your standard reservation is secured as per above but we do not charge your card until you actually arrive at the meeting site unless you "no show" or cancel too late (see our cancellation policy). You may call us to book a flight and you can mail in a deposit of 50% of the fare, paying the balance on flight date. You may also call us to book a flight or you can mail in a reservation request with a deposit of 50% of the fare, paying the balance on flight date.

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How should we dress?

Remember it not be much cooler in the air so wear whatever you are comfortable with on the ground and maybe carry a slightly warmer sweatshirt or cotton jacket. For morning flights it will be warming up as we fly so wear layered clothes so you don't overheat. We suggest tennis shoes or sturdy outdoor-type walking shoes (no open toes sandals). You should not wear open shoulder tops, as there is some radiant heat from the burners. Caps are a great idea for anyone 5'10" or taller.

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Do you only fly during certain months?

Yes, our flights are seasonal due to local weather patterns. The flying season is October to end of April each year, so about 7 months of the year. Our flights are in the morning at approx sunrise for the best conditions.

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Can family or friends follow in their vehicles?

Generally the answer is yes, most of our launch sites are on accessible to vehicles however it is important to stay connected with our official recovery ground crew vehicle and follow their lead. Ask our office staff if you wish to have friends follow us to the landing site as they can, for a small charge, join in the breakfast and champagne on landing.

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What is Adventure Asia's ballooning safety record?

This is an important question in selecting a ride provider. We are proud to state that we have what we believe is the best safety record in all of Asia. We have flown without incident since commencing operations and have a perfect safety record. Our pilots are highly regarded in the international ballooning scene and with many thousands of flying hours to their names. They have flown over 100,000 passengers in the past 15 years and not one has ever broken a bone or spent a night in a hospital. Our pilots are highly skilled and very safety oriented.

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What about your insurance?

Another good question. Insurance is a mandatory matter, as specified in our Operations Manual and by The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Our comprehensive insurance is with Sri Lanka's largest Insurance Co. and underwritten from abroad and meets the standards established by the International Travel Agents Association (ITAA).

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Are you legally authorized to provide balloon rides?

Yes, the CAA issues Commercial licenses to our pilots and in additional Adventure Asia holds an Airline Operators Certificate (AOC) which is the same as what any commercial airline is required to obtain to operate international flights. This authorises us to carry passengers for hire. We are the only company in the country to be issued such a license. In order to have an AOC we must also hold a Certificate of Registration (AoC) and Certificate of Airworthiness (CoA) which are updated yearly or sooner.

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Can an elder person fly in a balloon?

Of course! Our oldest passenger, to date as far as we know has been Sir Arthur Clarke, the renowned Sci-Fi author who was 86 when taking his flight. It is the best way for our senior citizens to see the delights of Sri Lanka that otherwise may well be missed.

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What provisions can be made for passengers with disabilities?

We have flown many passengers, some confined to wheelchairs, and we do not charge extra even if it means we must fly with less passengers than normal. Call us and describe the physical challenges and we will do everything possible to accommodate them on one of our flights.

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Can pregnant women fly?

This depends on two things, past history of the women with other pregnancies and or her history with the current one and the availability of a pilot willing to take on the responsibility of this unborn passenger. Our Chief Pilot has flown several pregnant passengers in the past, whilst not being responsible for the pregnancies!

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Do we have to sign a waiver?

Yes, just like riding a horse, you need to understand there is a risk in flying in any aircraft, including but not limited to Mother Nature's fickle ways. (see copy of our waiver)

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What if I am afraid of heights?

Unlike standing on a cliff or on the edge of a building, you will not suffer from a vertigo feeling. With the high sides (approximately 52") of our baskets and the sturdy floor you will have a very stable and safe feel. There is no motion, swaying, or vibration as the balloon moves with the wind. Persons who might suffer from motion sickness in a car or boat **will not** be bothered in a balloon.

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How many other people will be flying with us?

Our basket accommodates up to sixteen passengers and we have compartments to separate the passengers. The style of basket has four compartments for four passengers each and another just for the pilot holding all his instruments and the fuel. To ensure a flight goes ahead we need 5 passengers to join the flight, which can come from a range of guests and our agents, so if you are a single passenger or couple you can still fly of course!

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What training do the pilots have?

All of our pilots are highly trained and experienced, most with over two thousand hours of safe flying. All of them are authorized by the CAA and the BBAC and have their commercial licenses. We think you will agree these pilots are among the very best in the industry.

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Can I bring a camera or video?

Most certainly, be sure and bring lots of film or have fully charged batteries. However big camera bags are not a great idea as space is somewhat limited.

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What about a gratuity for the pilot and crew?

It is common practice to tip these hard working individuals. Like any personal service if they do their job well it shows your appreciation for their attention to detail. An appropriate amount is at your discretion and can be given to your pilot to share with the rest of the crew or you may add the gratuity to your credit card.

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What material is the balloon itself?

The actual balloon itself, or the envelope as it is called, is typically made up of a specially coated, rip-stop nylon or hyperlast. In some other balloons though, the envelope is made of Dacron.

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How does being made out of wicker help the basket?

Wicker is a lightweight material that allows a good amount of flexibility and is aesthetically pleasing at the same time.

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What is a hot air balloon fueled by?

The hot air is captured within the balloon and is heated by multiple burners fueled by propane gas.

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How big do hot air balloons get?

The largest balloons that are commercially operated are as big as 600,000-cubic feet in size. However the average sized commercial balloon in the many countries ranges from 180,000 to 200,000 cubic feet. The Adventure Asia Balloon is 350,000-cubic feet or called a "350".

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How long does it take?

Passengers should set aside three hours for the entire excursion. Approximately one hour (+ or - 15 minutes) or 6-10 kilometers distance of this time will be spent in the air.

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What happens once we land?

After every ride at the landing site, pilot and passengers will gather round for a relaxing after-flight breakfast, Sri Lankan style!! This is an excellent opportunity for the entire group to wind down a bit and socialize with each other over a cold flute of champagne or orange juice or chilled mineral water. After the traditional ballooning toast your pilot will give a talk on the history ballooning preceding a special presentation of your flight certificate. The highlight of any flight is your unknown landing site which is likely to be a villager's back yard and all take great pride in having our balloon grace their property. 100's of locals are sure to turn out to enjoy the festivity of the landing and greet the passengers with the wide grins and laughter typically Sri Lankan. Our pilots have spontaneously voted our flying destination as in the top 5 in the world from the dozens of countries they have flown.

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Do you provide something for us to eat?

Absolutely; In the mornings, the celebration breakfast of fresh tropical fruits includes orange, papaya, mango, banana, pineapple plus orange juice whilst enjoying your imported champagne or alternative beverage.

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How high do balloons fly?

Although balloons have flown as high as fifty two thousand feet, our sightseeing tours travel across the sky from the surface up to 2000 to 2500 feet.

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How do I become a hot air balloon pilot?

In order to become a hot air balloon pilot, an CAA or BBAC certified instructor will have to take you through a training course that will lead to a private pilots license usually within sixty to ninety days per ability and flying days available. Pilots that wish to continue their training in order to get their commercial pilots license should set aside an extra 45-90 days on average. If this amount of time seems too long and you are willing to train full time for approximately two weeks.

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How do you steer a balloon?

Balloons maneuver through the air by utilizing different winds at different altitudes. Because wind direction varies depending on the altitude level a pilot can ascend and descend to the altitude of the wind direction they want thereby steering them in the direction they need to go. A pilot can also rotate the balloon itself by pulling open a vent on the side which shoots air out sideways and propels the balloon to rotate accordingly.

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Why do balloons usually only fly in the morning or at night?

Around sunrise and right before sunset are the two times of day when the winds are at their calmest. This allows for much safer maneuvering and landing.

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