



Parish of Ascension

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

TOMMY MARTINEZ
Parish President

Thirty Balloons and Three Shape Balloons Scheduled for 2015 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival

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GONZALES – Ascension Parish President Tommy Martinez and the Ascension Festivals and Culture Council, Inc. announced this week 30 balloons from across the country will be joined by three special shape balloons at the 2015 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival slated for Friday, Sept. 25 and Saturday, Sept. 26 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

Admission to the festival is \$5.00 for ages 13-plus and free for children age 12 and under on each day. Organizers encourage festival goers to bring their own chairs, but ice chests, bicycles, personal motorized vehicles and pets are prohibited. Bags, backpacks, strollers and wagons may be subject to security checks for your safety.

“This year we’ll have the crab balloon, the bird balloon and the cat balloon as our special shape balloons,” said Robert Ambeau, festival committee member and head of flight operations. “The kids should get a real kick out of seeing these balloons light up.”

Ambeau said hot air balloon tethered rides will begin about 4 p.m. each day. Rides will be \$20 per adult (13 and over) and \$10 per child (12 years and under). Balloon glows will begin at sunset.

Ambeau said the hot air balloon festival will kick off on Friday morning, Sept. 25 with a sunrise media flight at Lamar-Dixon. Area media personalities, along with balloon sponsors, will get the chance to lift off for a short flight on the festival grounds.

The first balloon competition flight will lift off on Saturday at 7 a.m. with the main target located in the “heart” of Ascension Parish, Ambeau said.

“The target will be Central Primary School on La. 621 so parish residents should see the incoming balloons shortly after 7 a.m.,” Ambeau said. “To make things more interesting, as the balloons approach the target, a balloon will lift off from that location enticing a chase challenge to the other balloons like a fox and the hounds,” he said.

Ambeau said seventy-five to eighty percent of the pilots participating are returning to the festival.

“They like coming down here because of our comradery, the Cajun people and their food,” Ambeau said.

Festival officials said a ballooning scene will be set up near the Trade Mart Building at Lamar Dixon so patrons may take photos of themselves sitting in a balloon basket with scenery in the background.

Ambeau said the balloon glows and tethered rides will take place pending safe weather conditions. He said windy conditions may warrant suspension of the tethered rides and glows.

Ambeau said last year’s festival experienced that type of scenario. A balloon being used for tethered rides was in its resting position between rides when a strong wind came up and picked up the balloon, prompting crew members to tie the balloon down and cancel flights.

“You have to watch the winds and make sure the winds are calm enough to put the balloon up,” Ambeau said. “If it’s too breezy, you have to wait for the winds to die down. It’s all about safety first. And when a balloon is seven stories tall, it catches a lot of wind.”

For more information about the 2014 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival, please visit <http://ascensionballooning.com/>.

CUTLINE – Robert Ambeau (center), head of flight operations for the 2015 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival, said more than 30 balloons will be participating during the two-day event on Sept. 25 and 26. Shown with Ambeau during last year’s media day short flight are Rebecca Buchanan with WBRZ-TV (left) and Parish President Tommy Martinez.



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