



Tips for Balloon Fiesta

Description



Major events are

usually a learning experience not only for those hosting them, but also for those attending. And the [Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta](#) was no exception. Although as first-timers we are by no means experts, we learned a lot about planning, options for RV camping, getting around the Balloon Fiesta Park and the area around it, and crewing. Below are some tips for Balloon Fiesta that we hope will be helpful to others planning to attend in the future.



Balloon Fiesta takes place every year in early October – in 2015 it is scheduled to begin Saturday, October 3 and end on Sunday, October 11.

The [Boomers](#) group that we joined this year reserved 40 group spaces back in March for this October's

event. Each attendee then had to make a an RV reservation online through the event website in order to submit payment. This is an event that requires early planning, so whether joining a group or not, plan to make campground reservations early in the year.

There are a number of different morning and evening sessions during the week, so it's a good idea to check the [event schedule](#) in order to select which days to reserve. Sessions include [Special Shapes Rodeos](#), [Flying Competitions](#), the [Gas Balloon Race Launch](#), [Balloon Glows](#) and more throughout the week. There are also chainsaw carving events as well as some local music performances throughout and a music concert on the second Saturday.

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One session includes all morning or all evening events. Some of the RV facility rates include tickets or tickets may be purchased at the entrance any day of the event. For information on ticket prices, click [HERE](#).

RV Campgrounds:

There are a number of campgrounds in the Albuquerque area. The [Balloon Fiesta RV facilities](#) are onsite at the Balloon Fiesta Park. The next closest RV park is [Balloon View Homes and RV Park](#), about three miles from the park, and the next closest campgrounds are both in Bernalillo (suburb of Albuquerque) between 10-13 miles from the park. One is a [KOA](#) and the other a state park, [Coronado State Monument](#). We've not stayed in either of these, so have no additional input. Three other parks are located West on I-40, between 16-18 miles from Balloon Fiesta Park. They are [American RV Park](#), [Enchanted Trails RV Park](#), and [High Desert RV Park](#). We've stayed at all of these, they are all acceptable. I just consider them too far from Balloon Fiesta Park.

In my opinion, staying at the [Balloon Fiesta RV facilities](#) is the best option. The bulk of the events begin before dawn &

The Balloon Fiesta to Old Town (about



restaurants nearby.

The down side is that the RV facilities are basically a big gravel parking lot. Not extremely friendly for pets (see Pets category below), and not scenic. On the plus side, there is a water truck that drives throughout the park constantly spraying water on the ground, which really helps to keep the dust down and the park becomes extremely scenic when the balloons fly above and around your rig and/or land in front to it.



on Fiesta Park:

1. Two types of sites are available just across Alameda

Bldv by the landing field:

Standard – \$30 per night – dry camping

Premium – \$65 per night – 30 amp & water connection

It's a massive area so you may be up to a mile away from the entrance to the event depending upon the specific location of the campsite. There are port-a-potties throughout and not much else. Free shuttles run frequently to and from the event.

2. Within a short walking distance to the launch field:

VIP East/West – \$85 per night – dry camping, rate includes 2 entry passes per night

3. On a bluff overlooking the launch field:

President's Compound – \$150 per night – 30 amp and city water, rate includes 4 entry passes per night

We didn't see these sites, but they are behind the vendor area (which is across from the launch field). That seems like a great location for photography for those with proper equipment that may not want to walk to the launch field.



The Balloon Fiesta RV facilities open the Monday before the event, and rates for that Monday through Thursday are half of the above rates.

There are a number of RV groups who reserve spaces together each year, including the Boomers. This can be advantageous as some of them command special locations for their groups, and manytimes may offer a group discount (we got a \$5 per night discount with our group).



This year the Boomers group was located behind the landing field on Standard sites, which also happens to be the area furthest from the launch field, about a mile to the entrance of the Balloon Fiesta Park. But with the landing field in front of us, a canal behind us and a decent amount of space between rigs, I found these sites larger and more private than many of the others.

There's a third party vendor for pumping and fills at the park. This vendor charges \$25 for pumping and another \$25 for a fill! Since this park doesn't allow dishwater on the ground, we had to get our tanks pumped once during our 13 days, but we did not need a fill. With a little better planning, we think we could have made it without either.

For more information on the Balloon Fiesta RV facilities, including rules and regulations, click [HERE](#).

If you are a member of [Escapees](#), or plan to join, and are interested in joining the Boomers group at Balloon Fiesta in 2015, please contact Judy, the group leader at Coolrvers@gmail.com. Registration for this group will begin after January.

Pets:

As mentioned above, the Balloon Fiesta RV facilities are not great for pets, since there are no grass or even soft dirt areas to walk them on. The landing field, the only non-gravel area, is closed off and has a lot of nasty, nasty thorns. These thorns make their way to all areas and throughout the city. Putting doggy booties on



helps.

Angel wouldn't be caught dead in doggie booties, so she got a few goat head thorns in her paws during our stay. To remove these with the least amount of pain, lick your fingers before pulling them out.

There is a very nice dog park a little over three miles from the Balloon Fiesta RV facilities, the [North Domingo Baca Dog Park](#). It has separate areas for small and medium/large dogs, water fountains and bowls (I bring my own). The surface of the park is dirt covered in mulch (no thorns!), and there are a few trees and a few shelters and benches around. To get there from Balloon Fiesta Park, take Alameda to Louisiana, make a right, the park will be on the left, and the dog park is on the north side of the park.

Pets are not allowed inside Balloon Fiesta Park.

Transportation:

The shuttles from the RV facilities around the landing field to the Balloon Fiesta Park have a special traffic. We saw lines waiting to board the buses on a couple of occasions and they quickly.



There is a wonderful [bike valet](#) at the entrance. We found biking to be an

easy and quick way to get in and out of the park. The volunteers at the bike valet leave at about 11:00a.m., although the area where the bikes are remains open. So those that plan to crew or stay later at the event should lock their bikes up.

There are [park and ride options](#)

include parking, admission and



shuttle to and from the event.

Finally, for those driving to the park, click [HERE](#) for information on daily parking, or [HERE](#) for information on a parking pass for the event. Parking spaces are limited and routes to the event are changed depending upon whether it's a weekday or weekend. For directions and maps, click [HERE](#).

Regardless of the mode of transportation, the balloons will be spread out throughout a 78-acre field, so those that want to get an up close look at a lot of balloons will be doing a lot of walking.

And be prepared to do some waiting around. While some days the balloons go out on schedule, on other days the pilots may have to wait around for the winds to be right.

Other bicycle information:

This area is known for goathead thorns, also called puncturevine (see Pets above). These thorns are found on dirt and gravel areas but they also sneak into cracks and crevices in paved areas.

I got a flat during our third ride to the park, and we saw lots of other people getting flats. In order to reduce the chances of getting flat tires, consider adding self-sealing tubes (slime), tire liners and or extra thick tubes in your bicycle tires before riding around the city.

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[HERE.](#)



Crewing:

I highly recommend
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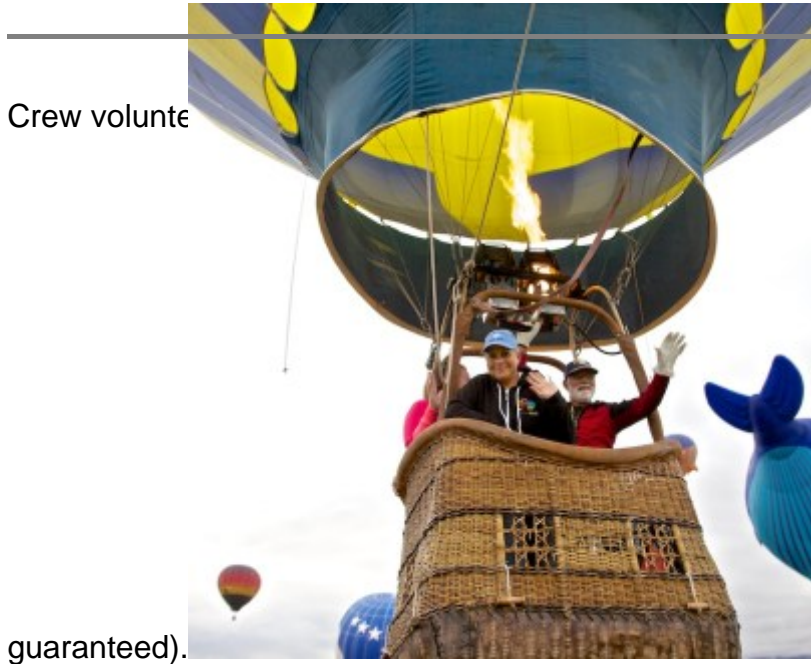


opens on June 1st, or you may register in
er of the launch field up to three days

before the event.

Crew volunteers are required to watch a crew safety video. The video is shown at the Pilot's Landing
at designated times, or you may view the [video online](#).





Crew volunte

en get invited to fly with their pilot (not

guaranteed).

Vendors:

There are tons of vendors at the park throughout the event including an official vendor for Balloon Fiesta souvenirs such as clothing items and pins. Other non-official vendors sell pins and lots of other



There are also quite a few food vendors, with lots of fried

and otherwise unhealthy food offerings and your friendly Dunkin Donuts and other fast foods. To avoid long lines, It's best to buy breakfast, coffee or any other food items immediately upon arrival in the morning or evening.

Other:

Laundry – There may be some laundromats closer to the park, but a little over three miles from the park, I found a large, clean laundromat with huge washers and dryers, Wash Tub Laundry at 7656 Louisiana Blvd NE. It's also conveniently located next to a self-service car wash and just minutes away from the North Domingo Baca Dog Park.

Recycling – There are no recycling bins at Balloon Fiesta Park. The closest recycling location we found is behind the Smith’s grocery store located at 8100 Wyoming NE. For all recycling drop off locations, click [HERE](#).

Travel to/from the city – To avoid getting caught in traffic congestion it’s best to wait an hour or two after events to leave the campground and arrive an hour or two before or after evening events.

The [2015 Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta website](#) contains lots of additional information about the event plus other activities in the Albuquerque area and some suggested day trips. For additional information on the Albuquerque area, check their [convention and visitors bureau website](#).

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Enjoy Ba



~ Brenda

Category

1. New Mexico
2. RV fulltimers
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Tags

1. dry camping

2. hot air balloon

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