



NJ LOTTERY FESTIVAL OF BALLOONING

Flights of Fancy

Marvel as some 100 colorful hot-air balloons majestically float through the sky, July 23-25, during the New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning. Held at the 744-acre Solberg Airport in Readington, the festival—now in its 38th year—is the largest event of its kind in North America. Eager for a bird's-eye view of the Hunterdon County countryside? Go up, up and away during daily sunrise and sunset mass ascensions (liftoffs: Friday, 6:30 PM; Saturday and Sunday, 6:30 AM and 6:30 PM). For the apprehensive, tethered balloon rides are available. Keep your eyes peeled for shaped balloons, including a unicorn, a sloth and the Unique Photo panda.

Back on terra firma, you can enjoy performances from kiddie-rock star Laurie Berkner (Friday, 1:30 PM), Max Weinberg's Jukebox (Friday, 8 PM), the Barenaked Ladies (Saturday, 8 PM) and Styx (Sunday, 3 PM). The awe-inspiring spectacles include a Friday-night fireworks show and Saturday-night balloon glow—a choreographed event where pilots blast propane burners, causing the balloons to resemble large fireflies. Human cannonball performances, magic shows and amusement rides offer even more family fun. On Sunday, festivalgoers can get active with 7 AM yoga, followed by the Running with the Balloons 5K at 8 AM.—JK

Festival hours: Friday, 1-10 PM; Saturday, 6 AM-10 PM; Sunday, 6 AM-8 PM. **Admission:** adults, \$26-\$40; children, \$8-\$15. **Hot-air balloon rides:** \$240-\$295; tethered rides, \$20. 973-882-5464; balloonfestival.com

READY FOR LIFTOFF

Pilot John Petreln heats the air inside the Bimbo Bakeries balloon. Once the air inside becomes thinner than the outside air, the balloon will rise, basket, passengers and all.

