



23rd National
BALLOONING
Championships
NORTHAM WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

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**Eyes to the skies! The National Ballooning Championships
return to Northam this May**



A colourful week-long aerial spectacle returns to Northam this May. The much-anticipated National Ballooning Championships will be hosted in WA's home of hot air ballooning for the first time in six years.

From 6 to 13 May 2023, the skies above the Avon Valley in Ballardong Nyoongar country will fill with vibrant hot air balloons as pilots from across Australia compete to secure a place in the World Championships.

The event is free to attend, and with the course spanning 30 x 40km, there will be plenty of vantage points for visitors to see more than 20 balloons gliding over the Avon Valley's rolling hills.

National Ballooning Championships Operations Manager Gren Putland said there was much anticipation from the ballooning community about this year's event.

"This will be the first National Championships in four years," Mr Putland said.

"Northam proudly hosted the Championships in 2017, 2015, 1981 and 1984 and the 2021 Championships were postponed due to COVID restrictions. The 2019 Championships were held in Mudgee, NSW.

"More than 20 world-ranked Australian ballooning pilots will compete for the opportunity to represent the nation at the World Championships.

"And Australia's best female balloon pilots will be back again in Northam in September for the Women's World Championships, the first time they have been held outside of the northern hemisphere. It's a great honour for us," Mr Putland said.

Current National Champion and Australian Balloon manufacturer Sean Kavanagh said Northam provided perfect ballooning conditions.

"It is exciting to get back to Northam and finally have a chance to defend my title. It will be interesting to see how the different time of year changes the flying area and it may be a bit of a test for those of us who are used to flying here later in the year."

"The Nationals in May will also be a great warm up for the Australian Women's Team leading into the World Championship in September. It is an opportunity to learn the flying area and build the teamwork and camaraderie that pushes the Australian team forward at these events.

"Northam has a great mix of flying conditions that challenge pilots. The surrounding farmland is a joy to fly over and the people of Northam always support the event and teams when it comes time to land. I can't wait to get back west!" Mr Kavanagh said.

Pilots will test their skills at varying winds and altitudes, competing twice per day at dawn and late afternoon (weather permitting) over five days (8 – 13 May).

Pilots will have practice flights on 6 and 7 May, providing another great opportunity to admire the hot air balloons.

Shire President Cr Chris Antonio said the community was looking forward to welcoming back visitors from across Australia for the spectacle.

"Northam is truly the hot air ballooning capital and is delighted to have the National Hot Air Ballooning Championships return in May.

"The Ballooning Nationals brings welcome visitors from all around Australia, who get to experience everything our fantastic Shire has to offer.

“One of the highlights is the Elevate Festival on 6 May. The stunning prelude to the Championships features around 15 hot air balloons with burners ignited periodically, lighting the night sky. It truly is an amazing display that rivals any firework display,” Cr Antonio said.

Complementing the Balloon Glow at Elevate Festival will be entertainment, markets, and food trucks. Northam will also host a number of activations throughout the week including a History of Ballooning display, and a Star Gazing event where visitors will learn Aboriginal cultural stories of the night sky. Northam is an official AstroTourism Town – renowned for its incredible night skies, so visitors can enjoy the balloons by day and the stars by night.

Northam is the ideal weekend destination, less than an hour and a half’s drive from Perth, with new attractions and accommodation options including the Farmers’ Home Hotel, The Temperance Bar and The Bilya Koort Boodja Centre for Nyoongar Culture and Environmental Knowledge.

The National Ballooning Championships are organised by Northam Ballooning Events and supported by Tourism WA and The Shire of Northam.

For more event information and to check the weather conditions for balloon flights and the Balloon Glow at Elevate Festival, visit www.northamballooningevents.com and the event’s Facebook page, and for accommodation information visit www.northam.wa.gov.au or email tourist@northam.wa.gov.au.

For tickets to the free Elevate Festival visit Eventbrite and search for “Elevate Festival”.

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