



MEDIA RELEASE

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The world's best female highflyers are fired up for September



Competition balloons over Northam, WA

The world's best female ballooning pilots are firing up for this September's 5th FIA Women's World Hot Air Ballooning Championship in Western Australia.

Thirty women from 13 nations - from Brazil to New Zealand and Latvia – will put on an incredible display of skill over Northam in the picturesque Avon Valley (an hour east of Perth) to determine which pilot is the best in the world.

Being staged from 2 to 9 September, it is the first time the Championship will be held outside of Europe and will also boast the largest number of balloons to ever fly in competition in Western Australia.

Dual Women's World Champion Nicola Scaife will be one of five pilots representing Australia. She said she was excited to be competing on home soil.

"I won my first two Women's World Championship titles quite early in my ballooning career," Nicola said. "Despite these early wins, my motivation to win a third title in my home country is very strong.

"The Women's World Championship is a very important event for pilots. Women can compete and gain experience at these high levels, which in turn builds confidence and skills to be competitive in other mixed gender, male dominated competitions.

"At the last open World Championship, for example, there were 105 pilots competing, and only five were women. Already we are seeing positive changes with representation of women at high level events.

"The last few Women's World Championships have been just as competitive, serious and skillful as any open World Championship, however there is a sense of support and appreciation amongst the pilots which gives these events a special feel.

“Communities really embrace these championships and are very welcoming to balloon teams. From experience, I know Northam will be no different.

“Not only is Northam an excellent place to fly, but the locals also really do help make the event what it is and I am looking forward to welcoming many of my friends, some of the world’s best pilots, to our country in a few weeks’ time.”

Dutch pilot and FAI Ballooning Commission secretary Sanne Haarhuis said she was excited to be heading to Australia. “I am super thrilled that the women’s event is happening in Australia as we have a previous world champion from that country - I think it’s awesome that we get to see her country from above.

“I love women’s events because while in the air we compete with each other, back on the ground we praise fellow pilots for what they have done and we celebrate each other’s scores.

“I think it is great that the Women’s Worlds events stimulate women all over the world to start or keep competing and to improve their skills to become a world level competitor.

“I can’t wait to come to the other side of the world and experience the Australian ways!”

Northam is Western Australia’s only location for hot air ballooning, providing a great mix of flying conditions that challenge pilots but with relatively reliable wind conditions, low early morning temperatures and lower rainfall.

Thousands of spectators are expected to make the easy journey from Perth to Northam to witness the colourful vista of balloons at dawn and again in the late afternoons from several vantage points as the pilots complete a series of scored tasks.

Balloons will be in flight on practice days on 2 and 3 September, followed by five competition days showcasing the pilots’ precise skill and technique at varying winds and altitudes. Flights are weather dependent and will be confirmed on the day of competition. Spectators should follow the Northam Balloon Events social media for flight updates.

Kicking off the excitement will be the *Northam Festival of Ballooning* on Saturday 2 September – a tailor-made music, entertainment, and international food festival hosted by the Shire of Northam. The festival will incorporate the Championship’s Opening Ceremony and official welcome to competitors, as well as ballooning demonstrations, inflation and night glow.

The 5th FIA Women’s World Hot Air Ballooning Championship is organised by Northam Ballooning Events and supported by Tourism WA, Shire of Northam, Bendigo Bank Northam Branch and Windward Ballooning, Australian Ballooning Federation and Northam Aero Club.

Information on the 30 female pilots competing this September is available on the [Watch Me Fly](#) website. For the full details of practice and competition times, events, spectator points and pilot details, go to www.northamballooningevents.com

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