



Balloon Discovery Center Celebrates 25 Years of Interactive Education

A new exhibit and returning favorites sure to excite 2026 ExxonMobil Balloon Fiesta® attendees

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — The Balloon Discovery Center (BDC) is celebrating 25 years of introducing visitors to the science, history, and art of lighter-than-air flight at the ExxonMobil Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta®.

To mark its quarter-century milestone, the BDC is debuting a brand-new interactive feature, "The Wind Factor," alongside returning fan-favorite exhibits designed to immerse guests of all ages in the mechanics of hot air ballooning.

"The BDC is a lot of fun! It's filled with activities for all ages and provides interactive opportunities to learn more about hot air balloons," said long-time BDC volunteer Suzy Dunnum. "My favorite part of my role is being able to meet people from all over the world."

The new Wind Factor exhibit offers guests a hands-on, high-speed lesson in aerodynamics and flight safety. Sitting five feet in front of an automated fan, visitors experience narrated demonstrations of how different wind velocities impact launch conditions.

As fan speeds gradually ramp up from 1 mph to 5, 10, and finally to 15 mph, guests gain a firsthand understanding of safe ballooning conditions and when wind requires pilots to stay on the ground.

Alongside the new addition, the BDC will showcase its most popular interactive attractions:

- **Pilot Simulator:** Equipped with large, curved monitors and realistic gondolas, this 3D simulator demonstrates the subtle skill of balloon navigation. Guests take the controls using the propane burner blast rope (to heat air and ascend) and the vent rope (to cool air and descend), experiencing the real-life delay between pilot input and balloon reaction.
- **360-Degree Virtual Reality:** Headset-equipped guests step into a simulated gondola for a 5-minute virtual flight, taking in 360-degree views of Balloon Fiesta Park from above.
- **Inspire, the Hot Air Balloon:** A walk-through exhibit allowing guests to step directly inside the envelope of a hot air balloon — a favorite photo opportunity for attendees.

"I always recommend Inspire first since standing inside a balloon is such a novel and memorable experience," Dunnum added when asked about top recommendations for first-time visitors. "After that, the Pilot Simulator, because it's fun to try to navigate a balloon like a pilot!"

The Balloon Discovery Center is located at the north end of Balloon Fiesta Park next to the Artisans tent. It is open from 5:00-9:30 a.m. and 3:30-7:30 p.m. during Balloon Fiesta. Admission to the center is included with entry to Balloon Fiesta.

For more information, visit www.balloonfiesta.com/balloon-discovery-center.

About the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Inc.

The ExxonMobil Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta® is an annual festival of hot air balloons that takes place every October in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. It is the largest gathering of balloons and balloonists in the world. For details on events, schedule, and entertainment, visit our website, [BalloonFiesta.com](https://www.balloonfiesta.com) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter/X](#), or [TikTok](#).