



## UP, UP, AND AWAY!

### The Fun is Ballooning in Monroe This Month!

If thoughts of the summer just ahead have you feeling a little flighty, then we've got the perfect activity for you! On back-to-back weekends this month, the City of Monroe will host hot-air balloon events offering ample opportunities to enjoy the sport of ballooning, the oldest successful method of human-carrying flight.

The fun begins on Saturday, June 9, when the city hosts the first portion of the U.S. Open National Championships, which will pit some of the best balloon pilots in the world against each other in a series of complicated ballooning tasks performed both in the air and on the ground.

Expected to compete are current and past U.S. and World Champion titleholders.

Unlike other balloon competi-

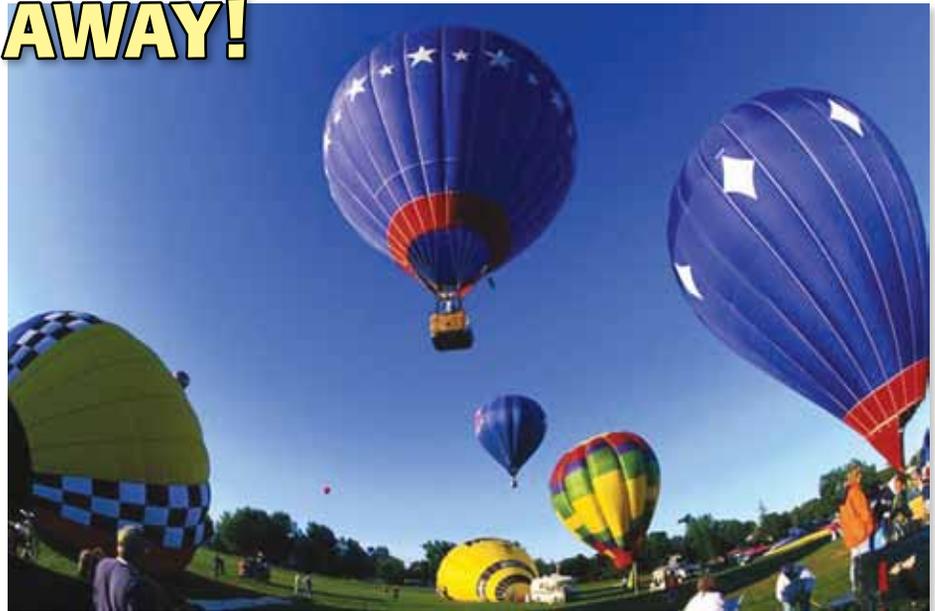


Photo by John Ivanko

tions, the U.S. Open National Championships will require competitors to fly in two Midwestern cities, challenging themselves in each of the

unique flying areas, with scores from both events combining to determine the champion. If the weather permits pilots to fly on all nights of the event, the U.S.

Open Championships will have more

tasks than any balloon competition ever flown, according to Maury Petrehn, the competition's visionary organizer and a past national champion.

The championships will open in Monroe with a Saturday evening Glow Monroe event, which will find pilots setting up and glowing their balloons at various locations in Monroe. Spectators are welcome to wander throughout the city, taking in the colorful balloons

illuminating the June evening.

The championships will continue in Monroe Sunday, June 10, through Tuesday, June 12, with competitive flights taking place each morning and evening. Virtually anywhere spectators find themselves in the city while the competition is underway, they'll be able to look skyward and see a swath of colorful balloons in flight.

Once the competition ends in Monroe June 12, the competitors will travel to Peoria, Ill., for the second portion of the U.S. Open National Championships July 19-21.

However, the hot-air balloon fun will continue in Monroe with the 27th Annual Monroe Balloon Rally held June 15-16. This annual event, sponsored by Glanbia Nutritionals and The Swiss Colony and supported by other community businesses and organizations, is a weekend jam-packed with a variety of family activities. Centered at the Green County Fairgrounds within Monroe's city limits, the balloon rally features 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. balloon flights as well as a visually stunning balloon glow both Friday and Saturday evenings. The balloon rally will also

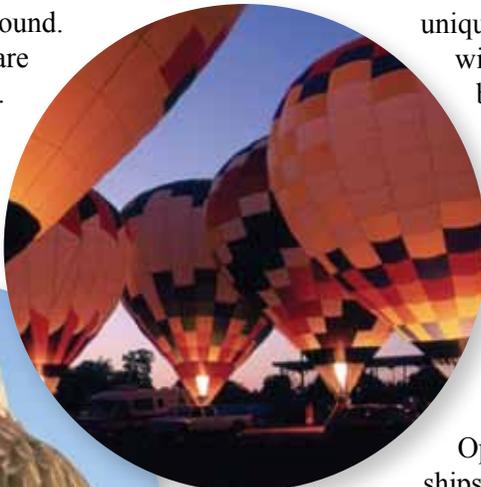


Photo by John Ivanko



Photo by Maury Petrehn

showcase several uniquely shaped balloons, including a 140-foot-tall American bald eagle balloon and a 110-foot-tall teddy bear balloon known as Mr. Biddle.

Those who prefer to take in a ballooning event by taking flight themselves will have their chance, as hot-air balloon rides will be offered to the public for the first time in Monroe this year. Spectators may choose to book a hot-air balloon flight—which will be offered on the days leading up to and during the Monroe Balloon Rally—or a tethered balloon ride, offered during the festival weekend.

Flights are generally 30 minutes but can last as long as an hour; duration is dependent on weather conditions, launch, and landing sites. Therefore, passengers should prepare to be flexible with their flight time. To book a flight and download the required forms, visit [www.Open-Championships.com](http://www.Open-Championships.com) or [www.monroeballoonrally.com](http://www.monroeballoonrally.com) and follow the link to the flight information.

Spectators who prefer to remain grounded will find plenty to do right at the fairgrounds. In addition to showcasing the hot-air balloon events, the Monroe Balloon Rally weekend includes the Hot Air and Hot Wheels car show on Saturday. Other attractions include an arts and crafts show, inflatables and carnival-style games for children, jousting and bungee challenge, 12 hours of live music, and lots of food and beverages. Also held during this year's Balloon Rally weekend is the cattle judging portion of Green

County Dairy Day as well as the Green County 4-H Dog Agility Trials.

Getting around to the various weekend activities will be easy, as Monty Chesebro's Tractor and Wagon Rides, sponsored by the New Glarus Hotel and Chalet Landhaus, will be at the event giving rides and shuttling

visitors to and from their cars.

Whether you prefer to enjoy hot-air balloons from the air or from the ground, Monroe will provide plenty of opportunities. Taking in one of the city's ballooning events is a great way to let your summer take off.—*Mary Erickson* ■

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**FOR THE WORK YOU DO.**

For more information about the U.S. Open National Championships, visit [www.open-championships.com](http://www.open-championships.com), [www.BeyondBallooning.com](http://www.BeyondBallooning.com), or call (913) 744-7170. For more information about the Monroe Balloon Rally, visit [www.monroeballoonrally.com](http://www.monroeballoonrally.com) or call (608) 313-4869.