



Gentle Lift-Off Into Serenity

Ask anyone to describe the experience of hot air ballooning and a common theme becomes apparent - it's an experience not soon forgotten.

"It was fabulous," said Kelly Burda, Chicago native and recent visitor to northern Michigan. "Seeing everything from that perspective was not only breathtaking, but serene." Burda, sharing a few moments from her trip with Grand Traverse Balloon, also described the experience as "calming, safe, and nothing short of amazing."

While the beginnings of the sport can be traced back to 18th century Europe, Traverse City residents began seeing balloons in the 1960s when recreational balloonists started visiting the area for the panoramic views of Grand Traverse Bay and the hundreds of lakes that pepper the landscape.

Jeff Geiger, a native to northern Michigan, began offering commercial rides in his hot air balloon built for four in 1987 when he opened Grand Traverse Balloon. Geiger's company now operates two balloons, accommodating up to 10 passengers per flight.

So, have things really changed since the 18th century? "The balloons themselves have come a long way from their modest beginnings," said Geiger, "but we still understand the importance of positive relationships with the landowners whose property we use for our landings. At the end of each flight we offer champagne from local vineyards for not only our passengers, but also those people kind enough to let us land in their fields. It's a tradition that began hundreds of years ago, but is still a very important part of the success of our sport."

Grand Traverse Balloon offers sunrise and sunset flights May through October and a few flights in the winter. For a vacation experience to remember, or simply a fresh perspective of the region in which you live, call (231) 947-7433 or visit www.grandtraverseballoons.com to make a reservation.

OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

Enter to win a chance for you and a friend to take a trip with Grand Traverse Balloon. Simply fill out this form and mail or deliver it to:

Balloon Contest
c/o Record-Eagle
120 W. Front Street
Traverse City, MI 49684

Name (first and last): _____

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