

Balloon Safaris: Staying afloat

With the recent award of a Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor, [Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris](#) has cemented its position as one of South Africa's most popular travel experiences.



The award celebrates attractions listed on TripAdvisor that consistently achieve outstanding traveller reviews. Taken into account are the quality and quantity of recent opinions submitted by travellers who have experienced the activity, as well as a business's tenure and ranking on the site's Popularity Index.

The honour is affirmation of the efforts of Bill Harrop, the original pioneer of commercial balloon flying in South Africa. Harrop began operating back in 1981 and has since carried hundreds of thousands of South Africans and international visitors on gentle drifts over the Magalies River Valley, some 45 minutes drive from Johannesburg.

Harrop's choice of the Magaliesberg as suitable terrain for ballooning was made after much research. It offers exceptional year-round weather and scenic interest.

Flights float over a landscape that includes the historic Cradle of Humankind, the Segwati Game Reserve and the Hartbeespoort Dam.

At the village of Skeerpoort, Harrop has constructed an award-winning Edwardian-style clubhouse where passengers converge at daybreak to watch the inflation of the balloons over a cup of freshly-brewed coffee. Flights rise with the sun, when the air is calm and stratified. After a flight of an hour or so, a lavish breakfast with local bubbly is served and passengers are issued with citations marking their "courage and fortitude to ascend unto the aether."

South Africans from all over the country include ballooning in a trip to Gauteng. For many, it's an activity to mark a special event. Some 50% of Harrop's patronage comes from the corporate world, which makes use of ballooning as an incentive or team-building experience.

The pursuit is one of the safest aviation activities and suitable for all ages from energetic five-year olds to nimble 90 year-olds. The business operates as a legally licensed Air Transport Service and employs highly qualified, professional pilots while all equipment is consistently tested and immaculately maintained.

Harrop has a fleet of six balloons, some carrying up to 18 passengers.

Besides the five-star Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris, Harrop operates the four-star Cloud 9 Balloon rides and the no-frills Action Balloon Flights, thereby meeting all budgets.

Harrop's customer service philosophy is based on 'treat your customer as you would yourself'. "Everyone of our staff, from the front line to the back office, delights in treating our customers how we ourselves would like to be treated, not how we might expect to be treated. We are consistently striving to deliver what we promise, every time, all the time. We are always looking for opportunities to give more. It always gives us a kick to excite and delight our clients."

The TripAdvisor accolade is one that "we can delight in trumpeting to the world," states Harrop. "The honour of being once again recognised as one of the top travel experiences in South Africa gives potential clients the confidence to book with us. Many of our clients say that they decided to book with us after reading the genuine, un-editable, guidance and rave reviews of others."

For more, go to www.balloon.co.za

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