



Special shapes add giant colour to this year's Fiesta

Heads will turn across Bristol as the 2010 ASTRA Bristol International Balloon Fiesta kicks off the ballooning with the launch of its iconic special shapes on Thursday 12th August.

The specially created balloons are a firm favourite of Fiesta fans and their launch on its opening day traditionally signifies that proceedings at one of the UK's biggest outdoor events are well and truly underway.

Three new shapes are making their first-ever appearance at the Fiesta this year. Making its first public appearance anywhere is Palletways' smoke-breathing 'Slick the Dragon', complete with the UK's only glass-bottom balloon basket. It will be joined at the event by 'George the White Motorbike', a giant bike which is one of the biggest special shapes ever built, and a third mystery balloon whose identity is being kept a closely guarded secret until the Fiesta begins.

The list of twelve special shapes is bolstered by the return of old favourites, such as the 165ft Scottish Piper, owned by Organising Committee Chairman Muir Moffat. 'Pipey', as he is affectionately known, will be joined by old friends in the shape of the Bristol-built Monster.com balloon and Churchill's Nodding Dog, which measures an extraordinary 34 by 24 metres - roughly the size of an office block.

The Kiwi bird, complete with its 10 metre beak, will be winging its way in from New Zealand to join the riot of colours above Bristol whilst a dash of class will be added to proceedings by the arrival of the Jaguar XK8 balloon in its finest British Racing Green.

All these and many more await visitors at what promises to be another feast of ballooning at the annual event, which this year celebrates the 50th anniversary of modern ballooning with a third more balloons taking part than last year and an expanded programme of arena events.

Set in the rolling hills of the Ashton Court Estate, the Bristol International Balloon Fiesta is now in its 32nd year and attracts 500,000 visitors annually. This year the four-day event is brought to the public by ASTRA, one of the world's leading satellite services providers.

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