



# A new kind of high

## *Bill Harrop's Original Balloon Safaris*

*The heavens are closer than you think. Levitating a few hundred meters above the ground, just outside of Joburg, as the sun starts to wash over the Magalies mountains is one of the most beautiful experiences you can have in Gauteng.*

**T**his was our fourth attempt, which meant our fourth 3.30am wake-up call, to try and get off the ground at Bill Harrop's Original Balloon Safaris. Because this adventure is so weather-reliant, numerous cancellations are not uncommon, but watching this experience unfold, it became very clear that all the early wake-ups were worth it!

Arriving at 5.30am at the glorious Clubhouse Pavilion that's just a stone's throw away from Hartbeespoort dam, one does not know what to expect. It's still dark and you can just make out the three flat balloons sitting on the field, waiting to be inflated. It was so exciting to sip a welcomed hot cup of coffee, while watching the giant balloons get the life blown into them.

After ten minutes of watching the round giants rise off the ground and it was nearly time for lift-off. Then, following a short safety briefing



on correct landing positions, the pilot ignited the balloon, which ever so smoothly started lifting off the ground. Millimetres at first, and then a couple of meters, we were moving towards the farm fields on the neighboring property. We were just high enough off the ground to clear the tops of the corn crops below. The pilot explained the science to us – we needed to stay low in order to catch the correct wind direction. After we had travelled about a kilometer, the pilot let rip on the burner and we climbed a few hundred metres towards the sky. How exhilarating! We were literally just floating in the sky – no wind, no falling or flying sensation – just the quiet serenity of surrounding beauty. Watching the sunrise illuminate the ever-changing palette of the landscape below was like a painting coming to life. This is definitely one of the most beautiful experiences in the country, if you ask us.

After about an hour in flight (or rather, in float), we enjoyed a smooth landing in a patch of grass, followed by some bubbly and orange juice, and we were able to watch the next flight take off from our landing spot, before heading back to the pavilion for a scrumptious breakfast.

If you are stumped for something to do on a (very early) weekend morning, we recommend trying this out-of-world experience! #

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