



**MEDIA RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**A FIRST FOR BILL HARROP'S "ORIGINAL" BALLOON SAFARIS: MICHAEL MAJA, OUR FIRST BLACK COMMERCIAL, HOT AIR BALLOON PILOT**

*Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris has been in operation for over 40 years, and they are elated to share the news of their first black commercial hot air balloon Pilot, Michael Maja, who has attained his commercial hot air balloon pilot license.*

Michael Maja has achieved a great accomplishment in the world of hot air ballooning and with the guidance, assistance, and support of Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris team has achieved his dream of becoming a hot air balloon Pilot.

Obtaining a commercial hot air balloon pilot licence is no easy feat, with a series of aviation examinations and over 100 hours of practice flights. Michael has undergone rigorous training and successfully achieved his 100-hour flight mark on Sunday, 20 August 2023, qualifying him as a commercial hot air balloon pilot.

Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris team is committed to providing opportunities within the aviation industry, specifically focused on hot air balloon specialisation. Launching their hot air balloon flight school and developing young talent for the succession of hot air ballooning in South Africa, with great success.

Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris CEO, Dale de Klerk, expressed his elation with the achievement stating, *"We are so proud of Michael's accomplishment, and we look forward to producing many more successful hot air balloon pilots with the support and resources of Bill Harrop's 'Original' Balloon Safaris"*.

Chief Pilot and Director, Tracy Robb, also congratulated Michael on this momentous achievement: *"Michael has proven to be a skilled and conscientious Pilot, fulfilling his training requirements and I am happy to share the skies with him as a fellow aeronaut. Well done Michael on your achievement."*

Michael is overjoyed, and shares this joyous occasion with his family, friends, and ballooning colleagues. He commented; *"I still cannot believe it! I could not have done this without the support and dedication of the entire team at Bill Harrop's 'Original' Balloon Safaris. Thank you for making this dream come true. I look forward to sharing the skies with my mentors and friends."*

Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris has produced their first black commercial hot air balloon Pilot and is set to deliver many more through its dedication to the upliftment and continuous efforts in the training and development of young hot air balloon pilots. Michael will be a beacon of hope to the youth who are seeking alternative avenues to the wonderful world of aviation in South Africa.

**ENDS**

**FOR THE EDITOR:**

*About Micheal Maja*

Michael Maja is a young man filled with ambition, a big heart, and a passion for Hot Air Ballooning. He is setting the way for other aspirant youth in the exciting world of Hot Air Balloon flying.

Michael's hot air balloon journey began as a teenager, earning pocket money as Junior Ground Crew at Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris, gradually increasing in skill and promoting to Senior Ground Crew and is currently on the Sales and Reservations team of Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris.

Twenty years since his dream took flight, Michael has put in a huge effort and time to earn his Private Pilot's License in February 2023 and began the journey of building hours towards his Commercial Balloon Pilot Rating (achieved in August 2023).

*About Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris*

Bill Harrop's "Original" Balloon Safaris is the "Original" because were the first registered Hot Air Balloon Airline in South Africa, with over 4 decades in the Tourism Activity industry. Boasting a private launch site, situated west of Hartbeespoort dam, the hot air balloons take flight in the Magalies River Valley.

*Bill Harrop's 'Original' Balloon Safaris and Alpi Aviation* are accredited Hot Air Balloon Flying School - SAACAA/1019/ATO.

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