

LANDSCAPE

Splendor *in the Sky*

They've seen the phenomenon for more than 35 years: tens of thousands of people flocking to their city for a week to watch hundreds of hot-air balloons lift off each morning. Yet locals still talk with awe about the annual International Balloon Fiesta, the world's largest such event, planned this year from October 4–12. Get up before dawn, they tell you, head out to the launch fields, buy a cup of coffee and a breakfast burrito, and prepare to be dazzled as whooshes of gas inflate a rainbow of balloons that then rise silently as sunrise lights the sky.

To learn more about the balloons, year round, head over to the Albuquerque International Balloon Museum and the Balloon Discovery Center, both within Balloon Fiesta Park. The unique museum is designed like a balloon about to inflate and offers exhibits on the history, physics and fun of the sport. The center offers interactive exhibits and a theater area.