

EXPLORE

# Air Borne

## What is ballooning?

Ballooning simply means, flying in a hot air balloon. If you simply want to enjoy the experience of flying, there's nothing quite like it. Many people describe flying in a hot air balloon as one of the most serene, enjoyable activities they have ever experienced.



## The Balloon

Hot air balloons are based on the very basic scientific principle that warmer air rises in cooler air. A burner fuelled by propane gas is positioned under an open balloon envelope to heat the air and make the balloon rise. The colorful balloon is usually made of nylon or polyester, the same type of cloth that parachutes are made of. The balloon fabric is much tougher than it might appear. If a bird were to fly into it would almost certainly bounce off.

## Ballooning Tips

- The best time to indulge in ballooning is after sunrise when the winds are their calmest. Winter months provide the most reliable conditions, but during summer months it is better to take off early in the morning. The duration of ballooning flight can change at the pilot's discretion, taking into account the wind, temperature and weight to be carried on the day.
- Clothing should be exactly the way you wear during a hiking trip that includes sturdy shoes or boots plus sunglasses, gloves and a cap.
- A balloon can move as fast as the wind blows, but high wind landings always require skill and experience.

## Ballooning in India

An ace balloonist and the force behind professional ballooning in India is Major Mukesh Kumar Yadav who has flown his balloon from various points across the Himalayas, taking it to a height of 26,000 feet at an air show in Bangalore and has represented India at a ballooning competition in Japan. India also has its own hot-air balloons and the Ballooning Club of India which organizes international balloon festivals and demonstration flights annually.

## ANIMAL KINGDOM

# Cat Power

## The Jaguar

The Jaguar, *Panthera onca*, is the third largest feline after the tiger and the lion. This spotted cat most closely resembles the leopard physically, although it is usually larger and of sturdier build, while its behavioural and habitat characteristics are closer to those of the tiger.

## What are its physical characteristics?

The base coat of the jaguar is generally a tawny yellow, but can range to reddish-brown and black. The cat is covered in rosettes and the spots on the head and neck are generally solid, as are those on the tail, where they may merge to form a band. The underbelly, throat and outer surface of the legs and lower flanks are white. They normally weigh in the range of 56–96 kilograms and stand about 67–76 centimeters tall at the shoulders.

## Where do Jaguars live?

The jaguar is a very adaptable animal. While it is usually found in dense rainforests, the jaguar also prefers forest habitats and areas close to water sources such as wetlands, rivers, lakes, etc. as it loves water and is a great swimmer.

## What do they eat?

A carnivore, the jaguar hunts for prey mostly during the dark hours of the day. Jaguars prefer large prey - deer, dogs, foxes, and sometimes even anacondas, but at times they also eat small species like rats, monkeys, etc.

## Which is the most unique feature?

The head of the jaguar is robust and the jaw extremely powerful. It has been suggested that the jaguar has the strongest bite of all felines. It prefers a killing method unique amongst cats i.e. it pierces directly through the temporal bones of the skull with its canine teeth, piercing the brain.

## How symbolic is the Jaguar?

The jaguar is the national animal of Brazil and Guyana. Synonymous to strength and power, it is widely used as a product name and symbol, most prominently for a luxury car brand - Jaguar and a sports franchise - Puma.

