



PRESS RELEASE
For 1 March 2019

FAI celebrates 20th anniversary of Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones' record-breaking round-the-world balloon flight

Lausanne, Switzerland, 15 February 2019 – **On 1 March 1999, the balloon pilots Bertrand Piccard of Switzerland and Brian Jones of Great Britain took off on an historic, non-stop, 20-day flight during which they circumvented the globe in just 15 days.**

By the time they landed on 21 March, they had set a total of seven new world records, including Distance, Duration and Altitude across all balloon types and sizes (Absolute category).

Four of these records – for distance and duration in two ballooning classes – still stand today.

On completing the flight, Jones told the jubilant, Geneva-based mission control team: "The first thing I'll do is phone my wife, and then, like the good Englishman I am, I'll have a cup of tea."

Piccard, 41 at the time, added that he felt an "invisible hand" had guided their "fantastic voyage".

About the records

The seven FAI world records set by the two balloonists were:

In the A-Absolute category

- Distance: 40,814km (current)
- Duration: 477h 47min (current)
- Shortest time around the world: 370h 24min (superseded by Steve Fossett in 2002 and Fedor Konyukhov in 2016)

In the AM-15 category (Mixed balloons: 22 000 m³ and above)

- Distance: 40,814km (current)
- Duration: 477h 47min (current)
- Shortest time around the world: 370h 24min (superseded)
- Altitude: 11,737m (superseded by David Hempleman-Adams in 2004)

About the round-the-world flight

Piccard and Jones' historic journey began when they took off from the Swiss ski village of Château d'Oex, and ended some three weeks later in Egypt – taking in Asia, the Pacific Ocean, Central America, and the Atlantic Ocean on the way.

Their balloon, the Breitling Orbiter 3, was a huge silver orb that stood 55m high when fully inflated.

Known as a Rozière – or Rozier – balloon, it combined the features of a hot air balloon with those of a gas balloon, incorporating a helium cell within a hot air envelope.

With a Rozier balloon, the hot air prevents the lifting gas cooling down at night and causing the balloon to lose altitude.

It's a principle invented in 1785, albeit using hydrogen rather than helium, which is a much safer option.

The red gondola in which Piccard and Jones made their 1999 voyage was equipped with navigation tools and survival gear, as well as a single bunk and a pressure-operated toilet.

It is now on display at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington DC, USA.

Notes for editors

Records: <https://bit.ly/2Nax9aF>

Photos (Flickr album): <https://bit.ly/2N5E2cV>

FAI logo: bit.ly/FAI_logo

About FAI

FAI, the World Air Sports Federation (www.fai.org), is the world governing body for air sports and for certifying world aviation and space records. The FAI was founded in 1905 and is a non-governmental and non-profit-making organisation recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

FAI activities include Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Airships, Amateur-Built and Experimental Aircraft, Balloons, Drones, Gliding, Hang Gliding, Helicopters, Manpowered Flying, Microlights, Parachuting, Paragliding, Paramotors, Power Flying and all other Aeronautic activities and Space records.

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