Ballongruppe Zürich
(founded in 1910)
ballongruppe-zuerich.ch

Bitterfelder VfL e.V.
(founded in 1909)
ballon-bitterfeld.de

Invitation

Ballongruppe Zürich and **Bitterfelder VfL e.V.**

invite you to the **10th International Competition** for the

«Silver Balloon of Zurich» 2026

on **Friday, 3 April 2026 (Good Friday)**

in **DE-Bitterfeld-Wolfen**.

A little history

In 2025, Ballongruppe Zürich (BGZ) revived an old tradition: the competition for the «Silver Balloon of Zurich». After the 8th competition took place on 17 June 2011 to mark the 100th anniversary of BGZ, launching from the Letzigrund Stadium in Zurich[1], the 9th competition was held in 2025, with Kolia Packard's team emerging victorious.

The tradition of competitions starting at the Letzigrund Stadium dates back to 1958, when BGZ was allowed to open the new stadium with a competition. Just one year later, the second competition was held at Letzigrund[2] . The next flights no longer started at the stadium, but elsewhere in Zurich: for example, at Landiwiese, Zürichhorn, and Dübendorf Airfield.

Until 1976, Zurich's gas balloonists were based at the Schlieren gasworks, where town gas was available to fill the balloons. Since gas production in Schlieren was discontinued, BGZ balloonists have been launching from filling stations in Attisholz, Bronschhofen, and Bad Zurzach, all of which are now history.

It is not only airspace restrictions that make gas balloon competitions in the greater Zurich area no longer realistic. Hydrogen supply and safety aspects also require new approaches to get the «Silver Balloon of Zurich» back in the air. With this current approach, we want to strengthen our ties with our partner clubs and plan to promote existing launch sites in the future.

New approach has proven successful

In the future, we would like to hold the «Silver Balloon of Zurich» competition at different existing launch sites in Europe. In 2025, this worked out in Burgkirchen a.d. Alz, where Freiballonclub Salzach-Inn e.V. welcomed us as guests. In 2026, the **Bitterfelder VfL e.V.** will open its launch site to us.

The connection to the city of Zurich and BGZ is underlined by the competition goal: the team that can achieve the maximum (or minimum, depending on weather conditions) distance from Zurich during the scoring window will be declared the winner of the competition. We want to enable sporting, strategically interesting gas balloon flights and define the scoring window as between 24 and 48 hours in duration. The competition task will be announced in detail at the latest during the general briefing.

The flight will be evaluated based on GPS tracking provided by the participating team in electronic form no later than five days after the start, published during a joint online meeting.

The winning team will be invited to dinner at the **Epilogium of Ballongruppe Zürich on Friday, 6 November 2026, in Zurich**. The trophy will be presented by the chairman of the BGZ.

The competition also counts as a score for the **Bitterfelder Kette**[3] .

[1] https://www.srf.ch/play/tv/schweiz-aktuell/video/ballon-nachtflug-ueber-zuerich?urn=urn:srf:video:72db3dcd-2835-4207-9411-6c60a1a5d895

[2] https://memobase.ch/it/object/bar-001-SFW_1033-6

[3] https://www.ballon-bitterfeld.de/bivfl/doku.php/bitterfelder_kette/start

Competition program

Tuesday, 31 March 2026 (or earlier if possible)

By 12:00 LT	Final decision on whether the competition can take place due to weather conditions or whether a postponement is necessary (notification via email and WhatsApp group).

Friday, 3 April 2026 (Good Friday)

From 09:00 to 15.00 LT	Check-in, document check, and start of balloon preparation at the launch site of Bitterfelder VfL e.V. in DE-Bitterfeld-Wolfen[4] . The filling order and schedule for the arrival of the teams on site will be coordinated with the teams prior to the event.
17.00 LT	General briefing
18.00 LT	Joint snack and welcome by the chairman of Ballongruppe Zürich (Andreas Zweifel) and the 1st Chairman of Bitterfelder VfL e.V. (Stefan Buchmann)
From 19.30 LT	Launch briefing (if still necessary), followed by launch

If the weather on Friday does not permit flying, the launch may be postponed until Sunday morning in consultation with the teams.

Conditions and organizational details

Conditions and operational details

1. **Competition**: Performance flight with scoring task.
2. **Scoring**: Maximum or minimum (defined in detail at the briefing) distance achieved during the flight (calculated as an orthodrome) to the center of Zurich (47°22.0130'N 008°32.5886'E).
3. **Scoring period**: The scoring window is between 24 - 48 hours from the official start time and will be announced at the general briefing. The launch window is max 60 min.
4. **Approved balloons**: Up to 1050 m³ with and without net.
5. **Safety, weather, and air law compliance**: Sole responsibility of the respective PIC (including flight plan and ATC).
6. **Preparations**: The balloons will be laid out by the teams before after 12.00 LT and prepared for filling together with members of the Bitterfelder VfL e.V. team. Launch aids, launch ballast and ground anchor straps, and launch ballast bags must be brought by the teams, and all ballast bags must be filled by the team itself. Please bring a high-pressure gas filling hose and filling nozzle.
7. **Further requirements**:
   - In addition to the PIC, a second pilot must be on board who has at least a valid BPL for hot air balloons.
   - Each balloon must have a GPS device that remains switched on throughout the flight and allows the track to be recorded in .gpx format (maximum recording interval of 1 minute, WGS84).
8. **Communication**: A WhatsApp group will be set up between all pilots.
9. **Catering**: Traditional snack on the day of departure at the site in Bitterfeld (included for 4 people per team, excluding alcoholic beverages).
10. **Alternative date**: Fri, 1 May 2026 – Sun, 3 May 2026

Organizational details

11. **Registration until Fri, 13 March 2026 via the online form https://forms.office.com/e/TmQPzLRiWd**.
12. **Documents**: The following documents will be checked at check-in:
    - PIC: License (BPL for GB, including night rating), medical certificate; recency in accordance with BFCL.160(a)/(b);
    - Balloon: CoR, CoA, ARC, CRS, and proof of insurance.
13. **Confirmation of registration**: Will be sent by email by the BGZ. The number of teams is limited to a maximum of 20. No entitlement to participation. Teams participating in GB26 will be given preference.
14. **Entry fee**: CHF 350 per balloon team (not EUR!!, to be paid by bank transfer within 10 days of receiving confirmation of registration – account details will be provided by email). Will be refunded if the event is canceled, but not if the team withdraws or does not participate.
15. **Award ceremony**: At an online meeting (date to be agreed at the general briefing). The winning team will be invited to the BGZ Epilogium (Friday, 6 November 2026, in Zurich) for the award ceremony (invitation to dinner for 4 people; travel and accommodation at the participants' expense).

[4] https://maps.app.goo.gl/HqYUAdyNdT7SQt5WA

Disclaimer and consent

Ballongruppe Zürich and Bitterfelder VfL e.V. accept **no liability whatsoever**.

All participating teams expressly consent, also on behalf of their entire crews, to the use and publication (on websites, social media, etc.) of all image, video, and audio recordings, as well as the tracker recordings of their flight by the organizers and other teams.

Contact persons

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Registration

Online form for team registration until Friday, 13 March 2026:
https://forms.office.com/e/TmQPzLRiWd

We look forward to seeing lots of participants and an exciting, energetic competition, and we wish you all the best of luck and fair winds!

Good luck and fair winds!

Ballongruppe Zürich & Bitterfelder VfL e.V.

Andreas Zweifel & Stefan Buchmann

15 December 2025