

## **ALBUQUERQUE INTERNATIONAL BALLOON FIESTA RALLY RECAP**

The 2015 Monaco International Rally at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta (AIBF) held October 7th through 11th, 2015 and was considered a successful rally despite not having David and Kay Piper, the long time Rally Masters, physically present.

The Rally had approximately 70 coaches (approx. 80% MI members) in attendance all observing over 600 hot air balloons, including over 100 Special Shapes and 80 flying foreign flags.

The low of the rally was explaining why the long time Rally host, David and Kay Piper, were not physically present. However, his spiritual presence was felt during the rally and we were able to send him many pictures and several videos of the group which he enjoyed.

The high was this was reportedly the first year in twenty-two years that the balloons flew all nine days, and Balloon Glows occurred on all scheduled evenings. The weather was the most pleasant in at least fourteen years.

Monaco again had The Best parking location that could be had at the Balloon Fiesta. We were located in the first four rows of the premier VIP West Parking facility, immediately adjacent to the launch field. We were less than one hundred yards from the launching balloons and countless balloons flew directly over our coaches at 100 feet, close enough to talk to the pilot and passengers.

This year, we arranged for a hot air balloon pilot of over twenty years talk to the rally group on the first night before and after one of our excellent provided meals. He brought his balloon system, set out the basket and partially assembled the system so all could see the instruments. Many took advantage of having having their picture taken while standing in the basket.

Several MI rally participants took the opportunity to crew for a balloon and some even got a free (not counting the labor of crewing) ride during the Fiesta. WOW, what an opportunity!

Almost eighty percent of the attendees were first time attendees at the Balloon Fiesta and for a few this was their first MI rally. Both groups were in awl with the balloons, location and the overall event. From the latter, we heard the traditional comment that it should be retitled the Ten Pound Rally. Yes, we ate, and ate. In addition to the catered BBQ dinner on the first night, we had two exceptional lunches and outstanding breakfast burritos one morning and of course, daily Social Hours with appetizers. The overwhelming response on the Rally Critiques was to keep all three of the restaurants on the list for consideration for future AIBF rallies.

If you have not been to the AIBF, it should be high on your Bucket List. Rally dates for 2016 are October 5th through 9th and you can sign up at [MIRVCLUB.COM](http://MIRVCLUB.COM),

Submitted by Co-Host:

De and Marvin Pitts

Sandy and Harry Hentschel (Substitutes for the Pipers)