
Pilot Schedule 2026 - US National Hot Air Balloon Championship and Old West Balloon Fest

USN - Saturday, August 8, 2026:

4:00 – 6:00 PM **Preliminary Pilot Registration**, Gering Civic Center. Pilots flying the Official practice flight must register, get competition maps, review, and sign the FAA Waiver acknowledgement form. Pilots will still be required to attend the full Pilot Briefing on Sunday evening.

USN - Sunday, August 9, 2026 (SR 05:56; SS 8:02):

All of the event-provided rooms will be available for check- in Sunday after 3:00 PM

5:00 AM Coffee and refreshments available, Gering Civic Center
5:30 – 5:45 AM Pilot Flight Briefing for optional practice flight (FAA Waivered), Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 9:00 AM **Optional practice flight**
8:30 – 9:30 AM Propane refueling (\$40/fill, cash only), Legacy Coop, South Beltline Rd

5:00 – 6:00 PM **Pilot Registration (for those pilots who did not register on Saturday)**, Gering Civic Center.
5:00 – 7:00 PM Pilot Welcome Party at Five Rocks Amphitheatre, **Mandatory - map and details in the registration materials**
7:30 – 9:00 PM **Mandatory**, General Briefing, Gering Civic Center

USN - Monday, August 10, 2026 (SR 05:57; SS 8:01):

4:45 AM Coffee and refreshments available, Gering Civic Center
5:00 AM Briefing doors open
5:15 AM **Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing**: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 9:00 AM **Competition Flight 1**
8:30 – 10:00 AM Return of unused markers, to Gering Civic Center
8:30 – 10:00 AM Propane refueling, Legacy Coop, South Beltline Road

USN - Monday PM Competitive Flight:

5:00 PM Briefing doors open, light snacks available
5:15 PM **Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing**: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 7:45 PM **Competition Flight 2**
7:30 – 9:00 PM Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
7:30 – 9:00 PM Propane refueling, Legacy Coop, South Beltline Road

USN - Tuesday, August 11, 2026 (SR 05:58; SS 8:00):

4:45 AM Coffee and refreshments available, Gering Civic Center
5:00 AM Briefing doors open

5:15 AM	Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 9:00 AM	Competition Flight 3
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Propane refueling, Legacy Coop, South Beltline Road

USN - Tuesday PM Competitive Flight:

5:00 PM	Briefing doors open, Light Snacks Available
5:15 PM	Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 7:45 PM	Competition Flight 4
7:30 – 9:00 PM	Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
7:30 – 9:00 PM	Propane refueling, Legacy Coop, South Beltline Road

USN - Wednesday, August 12, 2026 (SR 05:59; SS 7:58):

4:45 AM	Coffee and refreshments available, Gering Civic Center
5:00 AM	Briefing doors open
5:15 AM	Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 9:00 AM	Competition Flight 5
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Propane refueling, Legacy Coop, South Beltline Road

USN - Wednesday PM Competition Flight:

5:00 PM	Briefing doors open
5:15 PM	Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 7:45 PM	Competition Flight 6
7:30 – 9:00 PM	Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
7:30 – 9:00 PM	Propane refueling, Legacy Coop, South Beltline Road

USN - Thursday, August 13, 2026 (SR 06:00; SS 7:57):

4:45 AM	Coffee and refreshments available, Gering Civic Center
5:00 AM	Briefing doors open,
5:15 AM	Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 9:00 AM	Competition Flight 7
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Propane refueling, Legacy Coop, South Beltline Road

OWBF - Thursday, August 13, 2026, Optional Flight – Paid Flights Commercial Pilots:

5:20 AM	Pilot Flight Briefing: Mitchell Airfield
6:00 – 10:00 AM	Media/Sponsor Flight from Mitchell Airfield or Grasslands at Five Rocks
9:30 – 11:00 AM	Propane refueling, Legacy Coop location on Beltline HWY

USN - Thursday PM Competitive Flight:

5:00 PM	Briefing doors open
5:15 PM	Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 7:45 PM	Competition Flight 6
7:30 – 9:00 PM	Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
7:30 – 9:00 PM	Propane refueling, Western Nebraska Community College

OWBF - Thursday Evening Glow at WNCC:

3:00 PM	Vendors set up at WNCC
3:00 – 5:00 PM	Old West Balloon Fest Pilot Check-in Fairfield Inn and Suites
5:30 PM	Gates open
6:00 – 6:30 PM	Pilots arrive at Western Nebraska Community College – Pilot Check-in
6:30 – 7:30 PM	Pilot and Crew light Dinner
7:30 PM	Glow Briefing
8:00 – 9:00 PM	Balloon Glow , Western Nebraska Community College
9:00 – 10:00 PM	Propane refueling, Western Nebraska Community College

USN - Friday, August 14, 2026 (SR 06:01; SS 7:55):

4:45 AM	Coffee and refreshments available, Gering Civic Center
5:00 AM	Briefing doors open
5:15 AM	Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 9:00 AM	Competition Flight 8
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Propane refueling, Mitchell Airfield

OWBF - Friday, August 14, 2026:

5:20 AM	Pilot Flight Briefing: Mitchell Airfield
6:00 – 9:00 AM	OWBF Competition Flight 1 and Mass Ascension
9:00 – 11:00 AM	Propane refueling, Mitchell Airfield

USN & OWBF - Friday Afternoon/Evening Non-Competitive Activities:

1:00 – 4:00 PM	River Float, Johnson Casa pilots and crews , 170188 Bay State Road, Mitchell, see the map for the exact location and directions.
4:30 – 8:30 PM	Pilot BBQ, Johnson Casa

Saturday, August 15, 2026 (SR 06:03; SS 7:54):

4:45 AM	Coffee and refreshments available, Gering Civic Center
5:00 AM	Briefing doors open
5:15 AM	Competitive Pilot Flight Briefing: Gering Civic Center
6:00 – 9:00 AM	Last Competition Flight 9
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Return of unused markers to Gering Civic Center
8:30 – 10:00 AM	Propane refueling, Mitchell Airfield

OWBF - Saturday, August 15, 2025:

5:20 AM	Pilot Flight Briefing: Mitchell Airfield
6:00 – 9:00 AM	OWBF Competition Flight 2 and Mass Ascension
9:00 – 11:00 AM	Propane refueling, Mitchell Airfield
11:30 AM	Weiner Dog races and costume contest
5:30 AM – 1:00 PM	Craft Fair– Mitchell Airfield
5:30 PM – 9:00 PM	Craft Fair – Mitchell Airfield

USN & OWBF - Saturday Evening Non-Competitive Activities – Mandatory Attendance:

6:30 – 7:30 PM	Pilots arrive at Mitchell Airfield, use your balloon bucks at the food and beverage trucks for dinner (you can use them in town as well)
8:00 PM	Glow Briefing: All pilots, Glow field
8:30 – 9:30 PM	Balloon Glow, Mitchell Airfield
9:30 – 10:30 PM	Propane refueling, Mitchell Airfield
10:30 – 12:00 PM	Awards Ceremony and after party, Mitchell Airfield