

69th Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett

FAI World Long Distance Gas Balloon Championship

27.08. – 05.09.2026

Gladbeck / Germany



FSV Gordon Bennett e.V., Schulstr. 18, 47199 Duisburg

Civil Air Authority
Air Traffic Control Centre

To whom it concerns

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69th Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett 28. August 2026 from Gladbeck / Germany

Dear Sir or Madam,

the prestigious Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett, a long-distance gas balloon championship under the FAI, has been a hallmark of aviation since 1906. This year, the event will host teams from 12 different countries.

In this competition, the winner is determined by the balloon that travels the furthest in a straight line from the departure point to the landing site. Gas balloons, unlike hot air balloons, can endure flights exceeding 80 hours and typically fly above the inversion layer, at altitudes generally below FL140. Pilots often prefer lower altitudes to maximize their endurance.

Each balloon is crewed by two pilots and supported by a command center team that includes a weather router, a flight handler, and ground assistance. The onboard equipment meets day and night VFR requirements and includes 8.33 MHz VHF radios, Mode S transponders, GPS, aeronautical charts, ATC communication frequencies, strobe and beacon lights, life survival gear for oversea flights, ELTs, oxygen supplies, and satellite GSM. Flight plans will be filed to accommodate cross-border and night VFR operations.

The launch will take place in Gladbeck, Germany, approximately 20 miles NE of Düsseldorf. Depending on weather conditions, the balloons will launch on August 28th after 16:00 UTC, with a possible delay until August 31st to ensure a safe and successful race, as determined by the event director.

The event's flight office, based in Gladbeck, will include ATC experts who will monitor each team's progress via live tracking (available at www.gordonbennett.aero under "Live Tracking") and maintain communication with the command centers. With detailed meteorological analysis, the flight office will anticipate which countries and airspaces will be traversed, at least 12 hours in advance.



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To facilitate long-distance travel, balloons require clearances to operate in Class B, C, D, and E airspace under both day and night VFR conditions.

The event requests that teams maintain radio contact with air traffic controllers even in Class F and G airspace, particularly during night VFR and preferably also during day VFR. Since balloons control their drift direction by changing altitude, ATC management is simplified by assigning them a stable altitude and ensuring separation from other aircraft.

To coordinate ATC procedures effectively, we kindly request confirmation or exemption for night VFR operations with these balloons according to your air regulations. We are available for discussions in the coming weeks to address any necessary exemptions.

You can get in contact with us by using the general mail address: info@gordonbennett2026.de or in special ATC cases by using: atc@gordonbennett.aero

We emphasize that all competitors must comply with your air law regulations.

For any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

Sebastian Eimers
Executive Director

67th Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett

