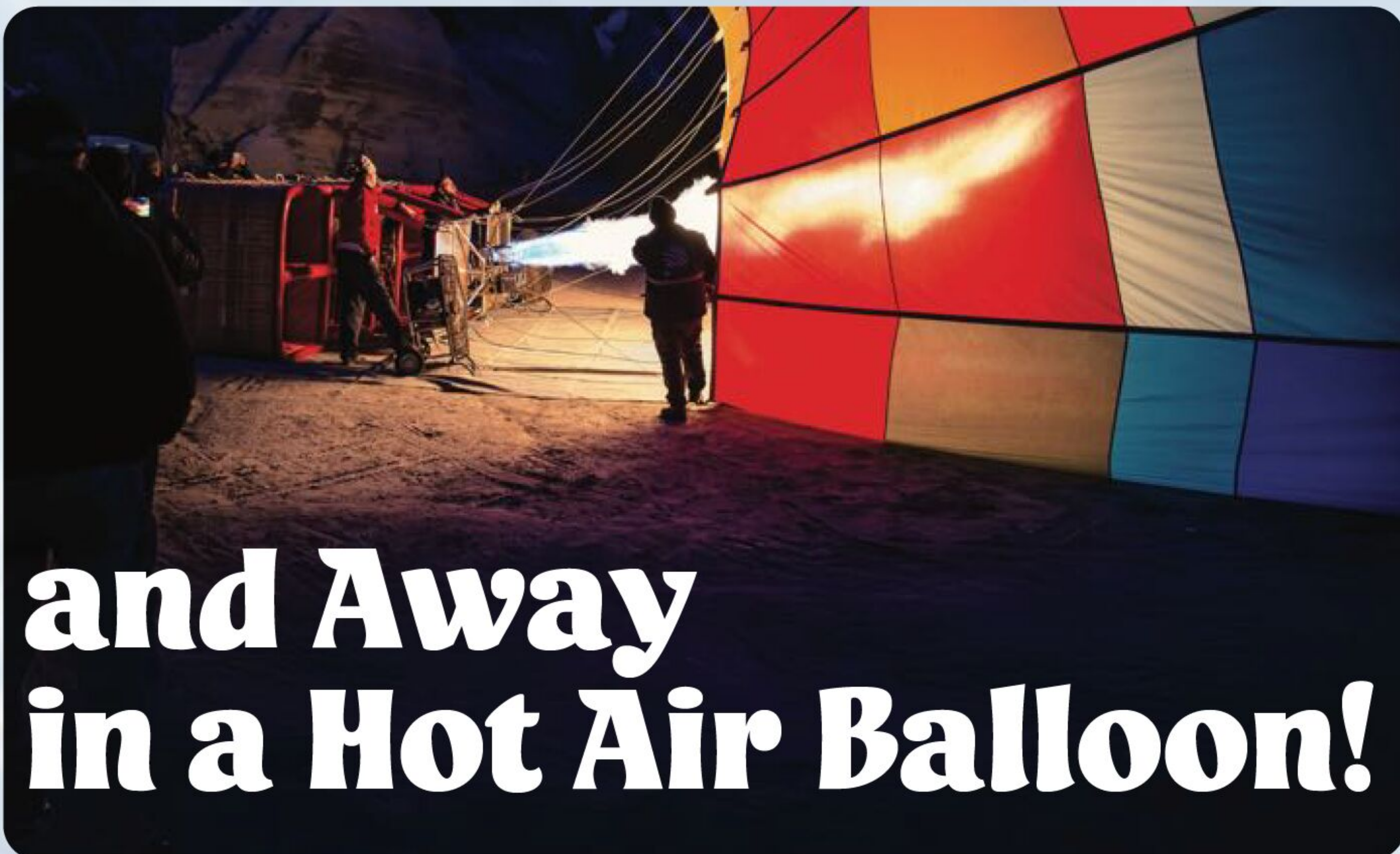
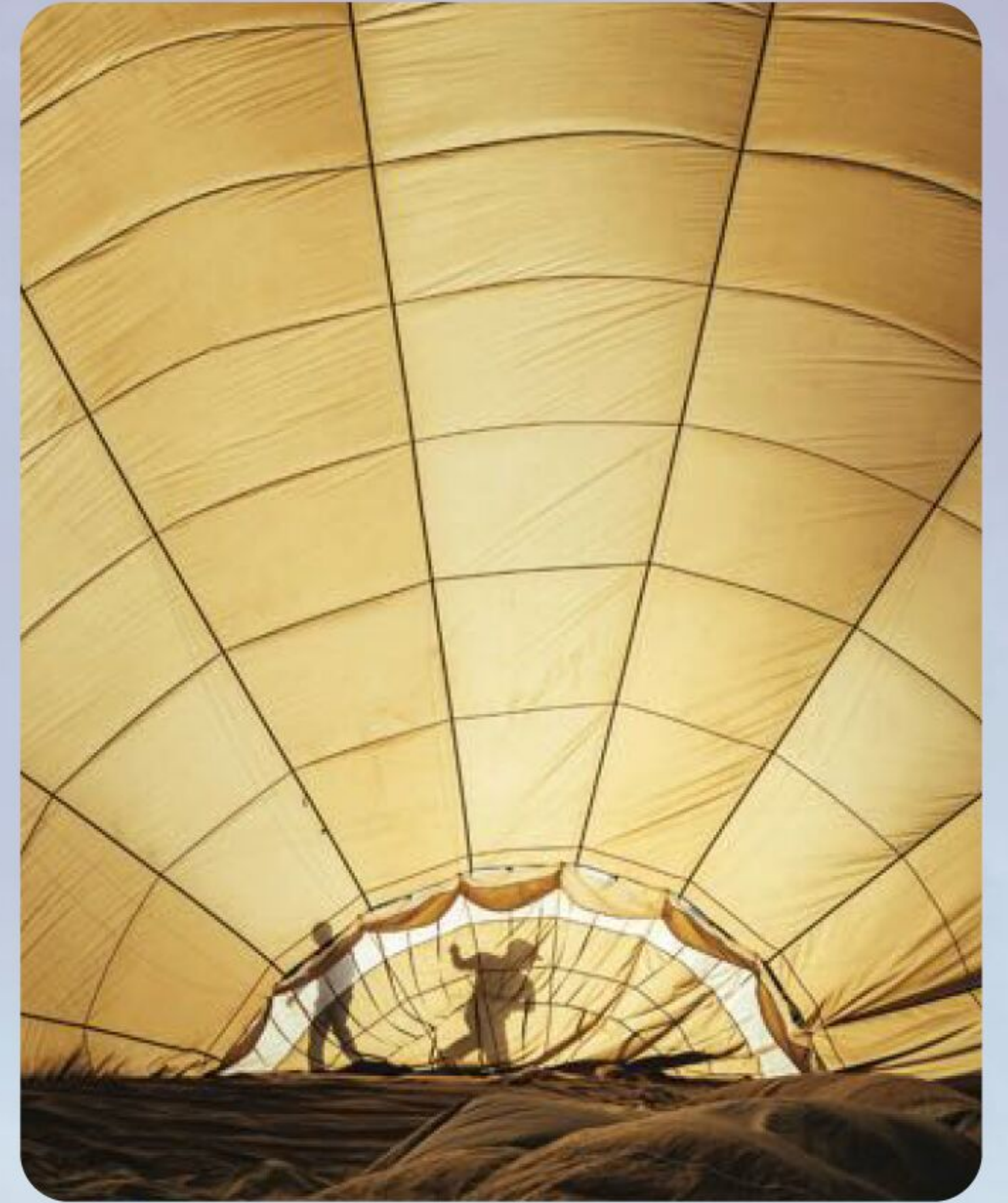
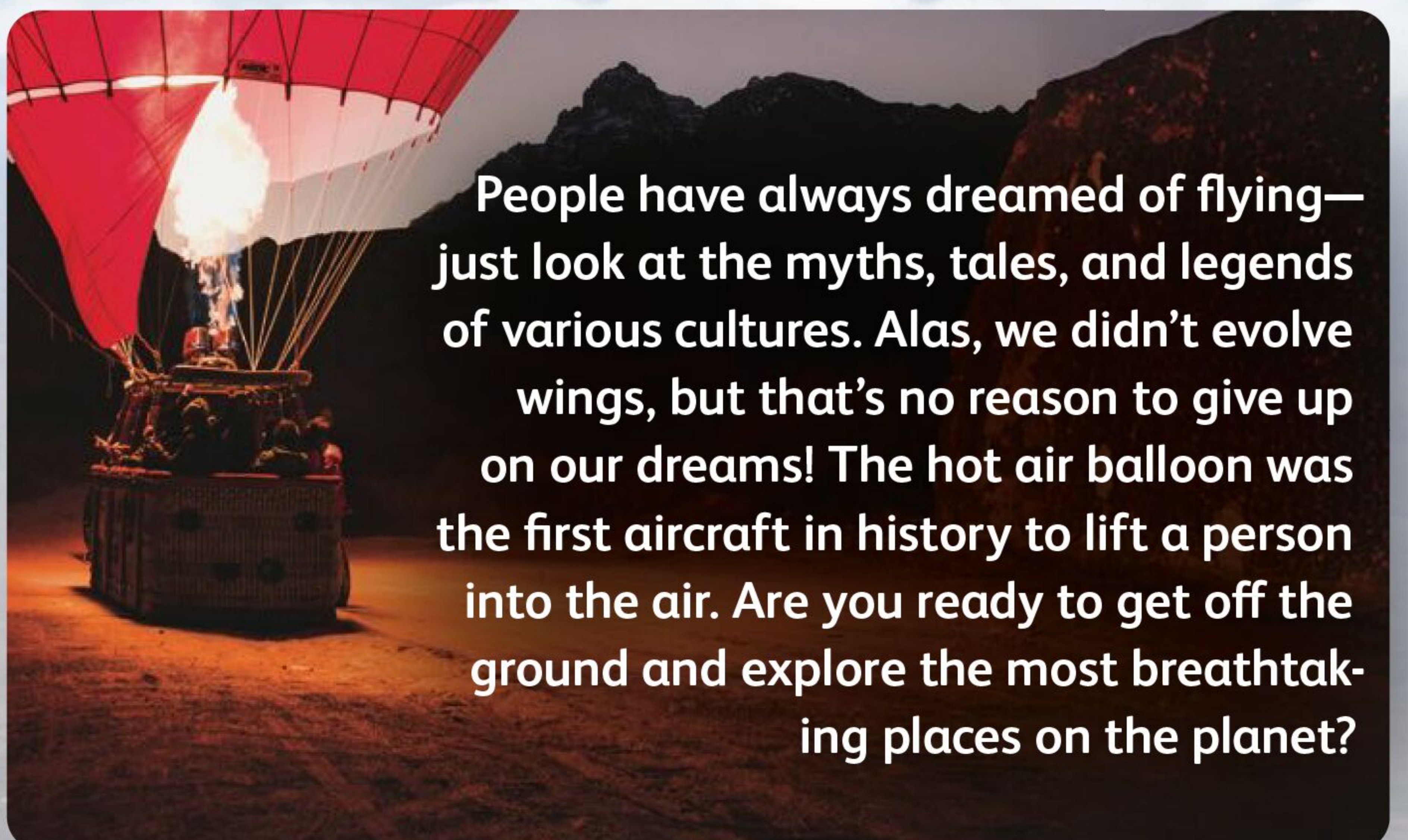




Up, Up,



**and Away
in a Hot Air Balloon!**



People have always dreamed of flying—just look at the myths, tales, and legends of various cultures. Alas, we didn't evolve wings, but that's no reason to give up on our dreams! The hot air balloon was the first aircraft in history to lift a person into the air. Are you ready to get off the ground and explore the most breathtaking places on the planet?

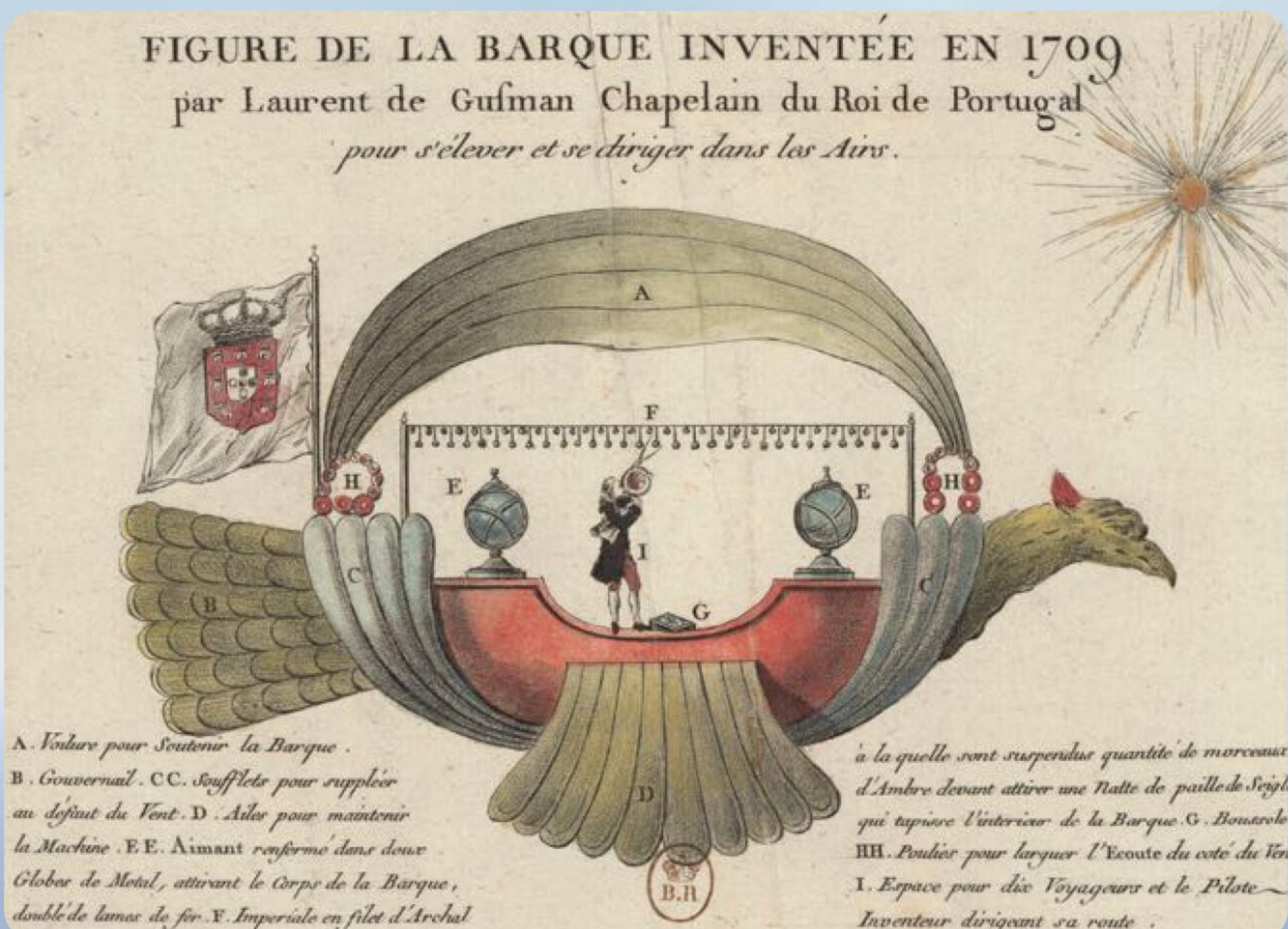
A sealed bag filled with hot air or lighter-than-air gas rises upward. This is how a hot air balloon works: it can carry passengers and even cargo. But how did anyone come up with this idea? The first working lighter-than-air aircraft was launched in 1709. Portuguese naturalist **BARTOLOMEU LOURENÇO DE GUSMÃO** managed to lift a hot air balloon model to the ceiling. Watching a soap bubble rise in the hot air above a candle flame drew his attention to the differences in air density. The first hot air balloon of more serious size (about 10 m in diameter) was created in 1783 by the French **MONTGOLFIER BROTHERS**. It flew almost 2 km. Later, they added a flair of showmanship by launching a balloon with passengers: a rooster, a duck, and a sheep. As the animals survived at a high

altitude, the brothers created a new model, which included a basket for two people. On 21 November 1783, volunteers **JEAN-FRANÇOIS PILÂTRE DE ROZIER** and **FRANÇOIS LAURENT D'ARLANDES** became the first people in history to take to the air in a hot air balloon. They burned straw and wool to keep the air in the balloon hot and stayed aloft for about 23 minutes, covering approximately 9 km. Incidentally, one of the ballooning pioneers also became the first casualty of such rides: two years later, Pilâtre de Rozier crashed while trying to cross the English Channel. He tested a double bag: hot air in the lower bag and hydrogen in the upper bag. The launch went smoothly until something caused a spark in the upper bag. It caught fire, and the hot air balloon, with nothing keeping it afloat, fell to the ground.



This silver medal was issued in Great Britain in 1811 in honour of **JAMES SADLER**, the first British citizen to fly in a hot air balloon. Sadler was a pastry chef and chemist, and in 1784, a year after the Montgolfier brothers, he also became an air balloonist.

FIGURE DE LA BARQUE INVENTÉE EN 1709
par Laurent de Gusman Chapelain du Roi de Portugal
pour s'élever et se diriger dans les Airs.



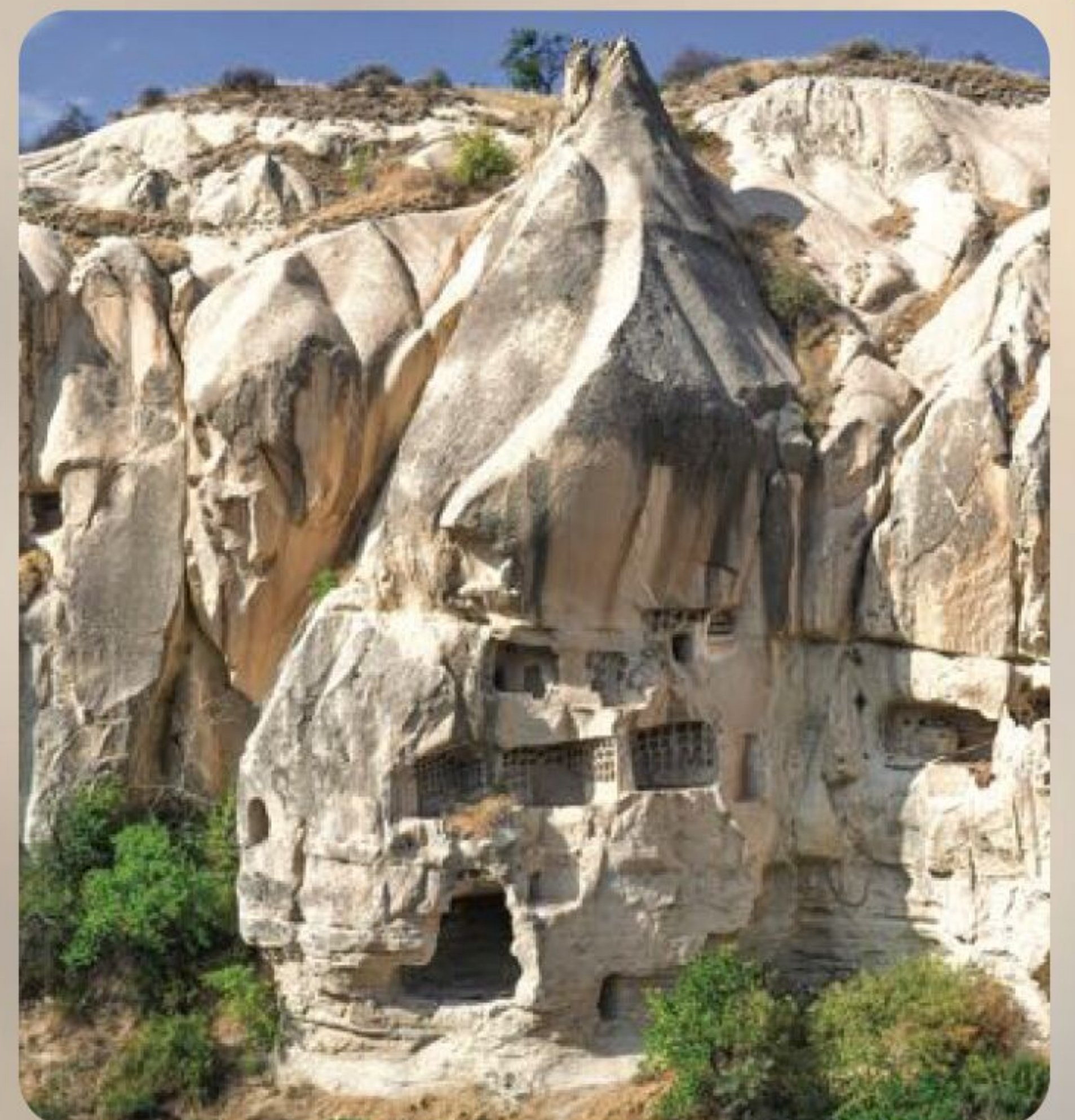
De Gusmão's airship model, *Passarola*

Today, hot air balloons are more accessible and safer than those of the late 18th century. Paper and silk have been replaced by nylon, and a special framework is now attached to the envelope to prevent it from tearing. Some balloons, especially those for long flights, are filled with non-flammable helium, although this is fairly expensive. For short excursions, liquid propane and safe gas burners are commonly used. There are even lightweight versions weighing less than 50 kg, capable of lifting no more than two people into the air. All that's left to do is choose a location!

CAPPADOCIA

Türkiye

You have most likely seen photographs of these picturesque places. Cappadocia's fantastical landscape owes its charm to ancient buildings and the local natural wonder, the "**fairy chimneys**." These up-to-40-metres high columns are made of tuff, a porous volcanic rock, and furnished with mushroom-like caps. A natural marvel indeed! About 60 million years ago, some of the local mountains were active volcanoes. The ash they spewed covered Cappadocia and hardened over time, turning into a layer of tuff. Then erosion took over—wind and water, like patient sculptors, carved these wondrous structures. The caps, on the other hand, are "sewn" from basalt, a wear-resistant stone also of volcanic origin.



LETCHWORTH

USA

This steep-sided valley in eastern New York State is often called the **Grand Canyon of the East**, but the comparison is, of course, no more than a token—Letchworth Gorge is only 27 kilometres long compared to the 446-kilometre-long Grand Canyon. The gorge was formed by natural phenomena as the Genesee River cut its way through shale, sandstone, and other rocks—this explains the beautiful diversity of this “cut” in the landscape. There is a great variety of waterfalls in the valley, including Inspiration Falls, which reaches a height of 107 metres, making it the tallest in the state.

THE NAMIB DESERT

Namibia

This desert is about 55 million years old, and its name is translated from the Nama language as “a place where there is nothing.” From the height of a hot air balloon ride, you can get a particularly good view of the unusual landscape which owes its appearance mainly to the extremely dry climate. The area is **famous for its tall red sand dunes**. They are thousands of years old, and the tallest one reaches 388 metres in height. The dunes are mainly located on the Sossusvlei plateau—at the endpoint of the Tsauchab River. The Tsauchab is a so-called ephemeral river, meaning its riverbed is only filled with water at certain times. The clay and salt of Sossusvlei absorb moisture quickly, which is why this lifeless area earned its name, derived from the Afrikaans and Nama words meaning “a dead-end marsh.”

LOIRE VALLEY

France

Tourists are welcome in this famous valley, which is spread over 280 km along the longest river in France: many castles are open to visitors, and from a bird's-eye view, the landscape unfolds like a storybook. Exploring the Loire Valley is best done slowly and thoroughly—**history was literally made in these lands**. The city of Nantes, located here, developed from the late 2nd century BCE as a settlement of the Gallic tribe of Namnetes and was an important centre of trade. Later, the lifting of the siege of Orléans in 1429 changed the course of the Hundred Years' War and made **JOAN OF ARC** a national heroine in France. And these are only two examples! The first castles appeared here in the 11th century. Overall, the valley boasts about 300 of them, ranging from atmospheric mediæval ruins to breathtaking Renaissance palaces. According to legend, one of them, Ussé, so enchanted the storyteller **CHARLES PERRAULT** that it became the prototype for the Sleeping Beauty Castle. Thanks to its highly fertile land, the area is blanketed in lush greenery, and the world-renowned Loire Valley vineyards only add to its charm.

YANGSHUO

China

Yangshuo County and its surroundings are known for their beautiful views and equally beautiful place names—such as Lotus Cave or Moon Hill. This hill, by the way, is one of the most popular among tourists and photographers: it has an unusual crescent-shaped hole. There are plenty of other bizarre natural structures here, all thanks to the geological karst process: water patiently sharpens rocks, forming intricate patterns in the stones. The **karst landscape attracts tourists** from all over the world: about 1.5 million visitors annually. There, they can admire the landscape from above: more than 20,000 hills, over 56 km of the crystal-clear waters of the Li River, rice fields, and traditional small villages.

BAGAN

Myanmar

From the 10th–13th centuries, Bagan was the capital of the Pagan Kingdom, and today, it is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. At the time of its construction, the Kingdom was very powerful (in particular, it controlled river navigation). Therefore, the Kingdom's prosperity allowed for an ambitious temple-building project—about ten thousand buildings of various shapes and sizes were erected. About a fifth of the buildings have survived to this day, and these lands are

sacred to Buddhists. Renting a hot air balloon and seeing ancient pagodas, monasteries, and pilgrimage sites from above is a great idea for a holiday! Just think about it: on the territory of the ancient city alone, there are **3595 registered historical heritage monuments**. Bagan also has almost ideal conditions for hot air balloon excursions: the flat terrain provides excellent visibility, and the moderate wind ensures stability and safety for the flight. [👁️](#)

