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Float over Ipswich in a balloon.

OFFBEAT

Proposals, weddings and final wishes 2000 feet in the air

by [LACHLAN MCIVOR](#)

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GRAEME Day has spent 27 years floating close to the heavens, racking up over 2600 hours in flight time as a hot air balloon pilot.

He has seen proposals and weddings more than 2000 feet above the ground and has had the best view of anyone to watch how Ipswich and its surrounds have developed over the past two decades.

The thrill of ascending into the sky never gets old.

But the pure joy that comes with his passion for taking to the skies most days of the week can sometimes be mixed with other emotions.

"One that sticks out to me is I had one girl who was 18 and she had two weeks to live," he said.

"That was emotional because she and her family realised she was not going to enjoy the experiences of life.

"That was hard. I've met the brother and sister who still live in Ipswich and they said it was a great memory they have of their sister."

He has run Floating Images Hot Air Balloon Flights in Ipswich for the past 18 years alongside his wife Ruth, with their 17-year-old twins Matthew and Kaitlyn now playing their part in the business too.

Mr Day learnt his craft in France and spent six years working in the home of hot air balloons before returning to home soil to work on the Gold Coast.

Photos

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Floating Images hot air balloon flight over Ipswich on April 11, 2019.

Photo: Rob Williams.



"I still love it," he smiled.

"Half the joy is flying the balloon. The second one is sharing the joy with other people.

"When you're passionate about what you do, you share that joy.

"It changes every season. There's new people, different flight paths and winds. Things change over time as you fly over it as well."

The family are passionate about promoting the Ipswich region, with this month marking two years since the launch of their 'Discover Ipswich' balloon.

The balloon itself weights just over 800 kgs before air is put into it and is capable of lifting 1200kg of passenger weight.

Mr Day took another set of passengers on a mesmerising journey through the sky on Thursday morning, taking off from Limestone Park just before 9am for an hour-long trip.

Riders got a view unlike any of the heritage city before venturing out to the picturesque country on the outskirts of Ipswich as the sun rose.

The basket was filled with eight people, sat at about 2000 ft for the majority of the journey and travelled at a top speed of 30km/h before landing in Glamorgan Vale.

While most people have flown before in commercial planes, travelling through the air in this fashion is unlike anything else.

Being able to gain a new perspective on Ipswich's CBD and new developments in rapidly growing parts of the city, as well as a bird's eye view on things like the prison at Barallon and the Somerset countryside was fascinating.

"It's very smooth and very surreal," Mr Day said.