

Helium Balloon in Paris Displays Air Pollution Levels

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Aérophile's balloon turns different colors depending on the air pollution levels, as registered by the air quality organization Airparif.

People in Paris won't have to look far to see the city's air pollution levels. A giant tethered helium balloon will display real-time reports of atmospheric pollution using an innovative lighting system, which can be seen from more than 20 km (12.4 miles) away.

A company called Aérophile announced its recent launch of the gas balloon, known as the AERO30NG Aérophile 5500 model, which is located in the Parc Andre Citroën in Paris. Aérophile manufactures tethered gas balloons as tourist and cultural attractions for places including Disney Village in Paris and the Great Park Balloon in Irvine, California.

The newest balloon, which is filled with 6,000 cubic meters of helium, will serve as both an eco-diagnostic public awareness tool as well as a tourist attraction.

Around the city, air pollution data will be collected by several sensors set up by Airparif, an organization that measures air quality in France. Based on this data, the Aérophile balloon will display two measurements: ambient air quality and air pollution produced by auto emissions, which is measured at major traffic junctions.

The balloon's color signifies the ambient air quality using three projectors that are located in the middle of the balloon. For example, red signifies highly polluted air, orange for polluted, yellow for moderate, light green for clean, and green for very clean.

To display traffic pollution, a high-powered rotating laser at the base sweeps across the lower half of the balloon. Both pollution displays will be visible day and night. Also, Airparif will be recording the data on its Web site, along with that of 30 other European cities.

As a tourist attraction, the balloon will provide non-polluting rides for up to 30 passengers at a time. The balloon is tethered to the ground with a movable cable controlled by a hydroelectric winch - an environmentally friendly design based on the Archimedes principle.

As Aérophile describes on its Web site, "Flight aboard a tethered gas balloon AERO30NG is a unique experience full of sensations for the passengers. Silent and without vibration, the gondola is open to the air, allowing passengers to experience the sensation of being on a flying balcony 150 m in the sky. A 360° panorama unfolds before them, and in a single gaze they can take in the whole landscape."

More information: <http://aerophile.com/>

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