



CASE STUDY

Field Service

iX104 Tablet PC On The Fly With The Finnish Team At The Hot Air Balloon World Championship

In 1783, a human being achieved lift-off for the first time in France – and it was via a hot air balloon. Even though the basic principles of flying a hot air balloon have not changed in the last 220 years, the technology used in ballooning has advanced significantly from the first construction of paper-lined linen, held together by 2000 buttons and filled with hot air from a smoky fire of burning straw and wool. Additionally the benefits of advanced aviation technology and other equipment used in a hot air balloon such as Xplore's ruggedized iX104 Tablet PC takes ballooning to another level!

The 16th World Hot Air Balloon Championship took place in the skies above Mildura, Australia in 2004. It was a nine day adventure, which included early morning flights just before dusk and late evening flights just after dawn, when weather conditions are calm and stable. The Competition Director chose tasks for each flight based on the assessment of the current weather conditions.

The aim of any task is to try and get as close to a pre-determined point on a map, a road intersection or a target laid out on the ground at a known point.



The Finnish team took advantage of Xplore's iX104 Tablet PC and Global Positioning System (GPS) in planning the route before the actual balloon flight. *"We had the race map with goals and targets, restricted and prohibited areas loaded on the tablet. When we started planning the flight, we went through the wind information and checked the goals and targets from*

system. The iX104 Tablet PC is an ideal solution for processing accurate positioning data and other information requiring fast data processing capabilities," said Jukka Tahtinen from the Finnish Team.

The flying conditions in Mildura were extremely unfavorable. At the end, only four balloon flights could take place out of 11 possible flights. Altogether 13 different tasks were conducted during these flights. Xplore's iX104 Tablet PC is designed, manufactured and tested to withstand rigorous and varying external conditions such as temperature changes, drops and shocks.

Tahtinen believes that the versatility and robustness of the iX104 Tablet PC beats regular laptop computers in varying conditions. *"Among the benefits of using the iX104 are the ability to use the touch screen, the rugged yet mobile design and the versatility of tablet use in demanding situations without concern for system damage. We saw other teams using regular laptops and those computers did not survive in the harsh conditions in which we worked."* Tahtinen clarifies.

During the competition flight, part of team worked as a land crew to assist the pilot and the co-pilot. The iX104 Tablet was also used by the land crew in a vehicle. With the GPS they could follow the flight pattern of the hot air balloon and also were able to estimate the correct target balloon landing area. Tahtinen notes also the advantage of having the GPS and its antenna integrated to the tablet compared to a GPS connected to a regular USB port in which the GPS can drop off.

The Finnish team participated in the World Hot Air Balloon Championship for the first time in Mildura. Although professional pilots from other countries are very competitive, the team is confident that with hard practice and taking advantage of the latest technology, they will meet the challenge. Xplore's Centrino version of the iX104 Tablet PC and the AllVue hi-brite indoor/outdoor readable display offer new possibilities for discerning users. Tahtinen is confident - reaching a victor's stand is only a question of time...

