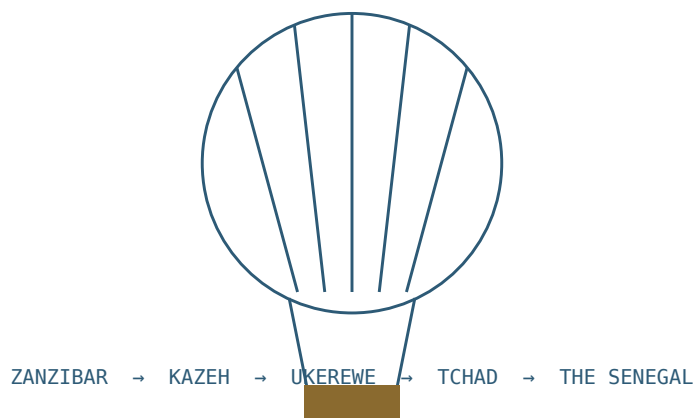


Five Weeks In A Balloon

A Journey of Discovery by Three Englishmen in Africa

Player and Developer Manual



1. The Voyage

In the spring of 1862 the Royal Geographical Society resolved that the blank in the middle of the map of Africa should be filled from above. Dr. Samuel Ferguson proposed to cross the continent from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic watershed in a balloon; the Society published his proposal, declined all responsibility for his person, and waited for the newspapers.

You are Ferguson. With Dick Kennedy, a Scots hunter who has told you to your face that the scheme is insane and is coming anyway, and your servant Joe, who has already worked out that men who arrive out of the sky are treated as gods, you take the Victoria off Koumbeni island on the first steady easterly and go west with the wind. The wind does not come back. Everything from that moment is arithmetic and nerve.

The voyage is 20 places in 5 regions: the coast of Zanzibar, eastern Africa as far as the market of Kaze, the great lake and the head of the Nile, Lake Tchad and the desert of Kanem, and finally the Niger and the Senegal. A complete crossing scores 150 of 150 and takes about 66 moves; a lean crossing that leaves the optional business alone scores 120 in 51.

How the balloon works

The Victoria is not an ordinary balloon and the difference is the whole game. She carries a Bunsen battery whose current decomposes water; the gases are burnt in a spiral of platinum inside the balloon's appendix; the spiral warms the hydrogen; warm hydrogen lifts. Cut the current and she cools and comes down. No gas is ever thrown away and no sand need be.

What is spent instead is water — and water is also what the three of you drink. The tanks hold 12 measures. Ascents and descents at the fixed beats of the story draw on them, and there are exactly four places in four thousand miles where they can be refilled. That is the ledger the game is built on, and the status panel shows it at all times.

2. Controls

Type commands into the field at the foot of the transcript, or use the buttons: choose an action and the CONTEXT band offers the things it can be used on. Everything can be typed instead, and nothing is hidden behind a button.

Band	What it holds
ACTIONS	The engine's twelve verbs, then the eight balloon verbs of this story
DIRECTIONS	Only the exits that exist in the current place
SYSTEM	Journal, quests, stats, hint, save, transcript, help
CONTEXT	Valid targets for whichever action is selected

The eight balloon verbs

These are the verbs that belong to this story rather than to the engine. Every one of them is needed at least twice, and none of them is optional.

Verb	Also accepts	What it does
ASCEND	RISE, HEAT, CLIMB	Warm the gas and climb. Costs water. Clears storms, crowds and muskets.
DESCEND	COOL, SINK, LAND	Cool the gas and come down. The only way onto the ground.
ANCHOR	GRAPPLE, MOOR	Pitch the grapnel. Holds the car still — and over a cataract, kills.
JETTISON	DITCH, LIGHTEN	Put weight over the rim. Once, at the worst moment, it matters.
FILL	REPLENISH, DRAW	Take water aboard. Four places in the whole crossing.
SHOOT	FIRE, AIM	Kennedy's rifles. Twice at an animal, once at a drum, never at a man.
SIGNAL	HAIL, WAVE	Put something down to somebody — a ladder, or your own name.
SEW	MEND, STITCH, PATCH	Silk, palm, needles, thread. Used to mend one balloon and to make another.

3. The Water Ledger

Water is charged at fixed beats in the story and never on a turn clock. Looking, reading, examining, talking, taking hints and walking about inside a region all cost nothing at all. This is dramatic architecture, not a penalty: the intention is that the ledger should feel tight without ever being something a careful player can lose to.

It also cannot dead-end you. Every departure that costs water is refused outright until the tanks can pay for it, and every one of the four filling places lies on the near side of the boundary it pays for. The table below is generated from the shipped rules, so it is the ledger the game actually keeps.

Place	Beat	Water	In the tanks
mission stores	r_fill_stores	set to 6	6
victoria car	r_launch	-1	5
duthumi tree	r_duthumi_ascend	-1	4
kazeh market	r_kazeh_ascend	-2	2
ukerewe shore	r_ukerewe_fill	+5	7
taliba village	r_taliba_ascend	-2	5
condor heights	r_condor_enter	-2	3
lake tchad	r_tchad_fill	+5	8
desert of kanem	r_kanem_fill	+2	10
desert of kanem	r_kanem_ascend	-3	7
tuareg plain	r_tuareg_signal	-1	6
sego river	r_sego_ascend	-2	4
medina bank	r_medina_arrive_gold	-4	0
medina bank	r_medina_arrive_plain	-3	-3

A full crossing that carries Joe's gold across the Senegal arrives at Medina with the tanks dry; a crossing that leaves the gold in Kanem arrives with one measure. Both are wins. The gold is worth five points and costs one measure, and that is the whole of the bargain.

4. The Route

Regions run west. Movement inside a region is free in both directions; the boundaries between regions are one-way, because the wind is. Where a boundary is about to close behind you the room text says so plainly.

I. The Coast of Zanzibar

Place	On the chart
Terrace of the English Mission	Zanzibar
The Mission Stores	Mission Stores

Place	On the chart
Koumbeni Island Shore	Koumbeni Island
The Car of the Victoria	The Car

II. Over Eastern Africa

Place	On the chart
Aloft over the Mrima Coast	Mrima Coast
The Great Tree of Mount Duthumi	Mount Duthumi
The Plain of Ugogo	Ugogo
The Great Market of Kazeh	Kazeh

III. The Great Lake and the Nile

Place	On the chart
The Shore of Lake Ukerewe	Lake Ukerewe
The Sources of the Nile	Nile Sources
The Village of the Talibas	Taliba Village
The Deserted Station of Gondokoro	Gondokoro

IV. Lake Tchad and the Desert

Place	On the chart
The Heights above Kanem	Condor Heights
Over the Waters of Lake Tchad	Lake Tchad
The Desert of Kanem	Kanem
The Plain of the Tuaregs	Tuareg Plain

V. The Niger and the Senegal

Place	On the chart
Over Sego on the Niger	Sego
The Falls of Guina	Falls of Guina
The Ground above the Falls	Above the Falls
The Left Bank at Medina	Medina

5. Objectives and Scoring

Objective	Pts	What it asks
Fit Out the Victoria	15	Load the stores, fill the tanks, get Kennedy aboard, and take the Victoria off Koumbeni island.
Ride Out the Tornado	15	Get the Victoria above the weather before the tornado breaks her against the great tree of Duthumi.
The Anchor and the Elephant	10	Free the Victoria from the bull elephant that has taken her grapnel across the plain of Ugogo.
Leave Kazeh a God	15	Get out of the market of Kazeh without being found to be a man.
The Sources of the Nile	15	Take and record a proper observation at the outlet of Lake Ukerewe.
The Tree of Death	15	Take the French missionary out of the square of the Talibas alive.
The Fight in the Netting	15	Drive the condors off the Victoria before they open her from top to bottom.
Recover Joe	15	Find Joe in the desert of Kanem and get him back into the car.
The Left Bank of the Senegal	15	Cross the Senegal below the falls of Guina and make yourselves known at Medina.

8 of the 9 objectives are required to finish the voyage and one is optional. Four keepsakes carry points of their own, and together they make up the difference between a crossing and a complete crossing.

Keepsake	Pts	Where it is
Petermann's map	5	mission stores
the silver crescent	5	removed
the silver crucifix	5	removed
the gold-bearing quartz	5	removed

Two of the four lie behind one-way boundaries. They are missable by design and are never a dead end: a player who leaves them behind can still finish, and still wins, with a smaller reckoning.

Achievements

Achievement	Achievement
Slipped the Cable	Nine Feet of Wing
Above the Tornado	A Ladder in the Desert
Towed by an Elephant	Joe's Gold Mine
Sons of the Moon	A Stitch at Eleven Thousand Feet
Where the Nile Begins	The Second Victoria
Cut Down from the Tree	The Whole Record
A Grave at Gondokoro	One Hundred and Fifty

6. The Four Ways to Die

There are four commands in the whole voyage that will kill you, and every one of them is warned about in the text of the place it happens in, and usually by Kennedy as well. Nothing else in the game is fatal; there are no unwinnable states, and no way to be stranded.

Place	Command	Why
duthumi tree	WAIT	riding out a tornado on a fouled grapnel
taliba village	DESCEND	landing among two hundred armed men
condor heights	ASCEND	warming a torn envelope at eleven thousand feet
guina falls	ANCHOR	putting a grapnel down over a cataract

A death is not the end of the session. RESTORE returns you to your last save with the ending cleared, and RESTART begins again on the terrace at Zanzibar. Saving is unlimited and named: SAVE kanem, RESTORE kanem.

7. The Cast

Person	First met at	Lines
Captain Pennet	zanzibar terrace	4
Dick Kennedy	victoria car	4
Joe	victoria car	4
the chief sorcerer of Kazeh	kazeh market	3
the Sultan of Kazeh	kazeh market	2
the French missionary	taliba village	3
the marabout of Sego	sego river	2
the officer of Medina	medina bank	2

Kennedy and Joe come aboard at Koumbeni and follow you for the rest of the voyage. Talking is not decoration: the sorcerer of Kazeh will not put his litter down until he is spoken to, and the French missionary only asks for his crucifix to be carried to Europe on the third time of asking. A player who never talks to him buries it with him.

8. Hints

HINT gives graduated help for wherever you are and whatever you have done. There are 48 ladders of 3 rungs, covering all 20 places: the first rung names the problem, the second points at the answer, the third is the command. Hints do not cost a turn and do not cost water.

9. Developer Notes

This package is a story for TIFE Core 2.3.0. The engine ships untouched: all eleven engine files — the nine services in `js/core`, the DOM adapter `js/game.js`, and `css/game.css` — are byte-identical to the Tronsoft kit, and their SHA-256 digests are recorded in `docs/engine-purity.json` and rechecked by the validator inside the package.

Everything this story needs beyond the stock engine is added at run time from the game side, by patching prototypes in `js/interface.js`. Core's rule vocabulary is deliberately small; the patch layer widens it and fixes the kit's known defects without editing a line of it.

Layer	Purpose
<code>games/five-weeks-in-a-balloon/game.js</code>	The whole story as data: rooms, items, cast, rules, hints
<code>js/interface.js</code>	Rule vocabulary, story verbs, reading order, saves, engine fixes
<code>js/map.js</code>	Region chart and the water gauge, repainted by MutationObserver
<code>js/sound.js</code>	Five procedural WebAudio region beds; no audio files ship
<code>css/theme.css</code>	Sun-bleached canvas and brass skin over the kit stylesheet

Shipped shape

Measure	n	Measure	n
Places	20	Rule condition keys	10
Regions	5	Rule action types	18
Exits	31	Objectives	9
Story-gated exits	12	Achievements	14
Objects	63	Hint ladders	48
Portable objects	14	Hint rungs	144
Scored keepsakes	4	Journal entries	20
Cast	8	Maximum score	150
Rules	84	Par moves	68
Rule triggers	16		

Verification

The package is gated by three independent checks, all of which must pass against the extracted archive before it ships: a Node development battery that runs the real engine files in a sandbox, the dependency-free `validate.js` inside the package, and a live browser playthrough that types the route into the actual command field. The routes quoted in this manual are the measured ones, not the intended ones.

Saved games

Saves are held in browser local storage under the key `tronsoft_tife_five_weeks_in_a_balloon_save`, derived from the package slug as the specification recommends. They belong to this package alone and are never shared with another game.

10. Walkthrough

The complete crossing in 66 moves, scoring 150 of 150. Read no further if you would rather find the head of the Nile yourself.

1. TALK PENNET	2. READ COMMISSION	3. NORTH	4. READ MANIFEST
5. TAKE BATTERY	6. TAKE SEXTANT	7. TAKE ROLL	8. TAKE GRAPNEL
9. TAKE RIFLES	10. TAKE LADDER	11. TAKE MAP	12. FILL
13. SOUTH	14. EAST	15. UP	16. TALK KENNEDY
17. ASCEND	18. WEST	19. ASCEND	20. WEST
21. SHOOT ELEPHANT	22. TAKE FOOT	23. WEST	24. TALK SORCERER
25. SEARCH LITTER	26. TAKE CRESCENT	27. ASCEND	28. WEST
29. DESCEND	30. FILL	31. NORTH	32. ANCHOR
33. USE SEXTANT	34. SOUTH	35. WEST	36. SHOOT DRUM
37. DESCEND	38. TALK MISSIONARY	39. TALK MISSIONARY	40. TALK MISSIONARY
41. ASCEND	42. WEST	43. ANCHOR	44. TAKE CRUCIFIX
45. WEST	46. SHOOT CONDORS	47. DOWN	48. JETTISON
49. FILL	50. WEST	51. SEW	52. FILL
53. SEARCH ROCK	54. TAKE GOLD	55. SEARCH TRACKS	56. ASCEND
57. NORTH	58. SIGNAL	59. WEST	60. TAKE BALL
61. ASCEND	62. WEST	63. DOWN	64. SEW
65. WEST	66. SIGNAL		

The lean crossing — 51 moves for 120 points — is the same route with the optional elephant, the four keepsakes and the conversations that unlock them left out.

Source and licence

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