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Nuclear Bike Riding? Hanford Takes People On A 'Ride The Reactor' Historical Tour

By ESMY JIMENEZ · 19 HOURS AGO



The B Reactor has been shut down since 1968 but now serves as a historical monument. For one day of the year, it also serves as part of a recreational area for bikers to enjoy.

The second annual Ride the Reactor bike tour took place Saturday. Sixty people rode a 14-mile track around Hanford's decommissioned B Reactor. It's part of a federal effort to get the public more connected to the nation's nuclear history.

Plutonium from the reactor was part of the top-secret Manhattan Project, used in the first nuclear detonation called the Trinity Test and also supplying the plutonium for the bomb that was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

After 72 years, the public is getting a closer look at this history. Federal, state, non-profit, and community business partners are repurposing the space into a recreational area.

It's not hard to see why. Located in the Columbia Basin desert of Central Washington, the reactor sits close to the Columbia River in one of the hottest, driest ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest. While the trail is not open year round yet, the B Reactor Museum does tours six days a week.

Eric Schmieman, who's now retired, previously was a civil engineer and worked with the Chernobyl New Safe Confinement Project in Ukraine.

"I spent nearly a decade living in Ukraine, the Chernobyl site," Schieman said. "I did a lot of bicycling around there, [not in Chernobyl but the living community 60 miles away.] I often thought it would be a good tourist destination for bicyclists there. I couldn't imagine that I would be bicycling around Hanford to see the B Reactor."

There are plans to lead another Ride the Reactor bike tour next fall.

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