

Bike for Hope for Armenia Group of Cyclists Rode for the CRD in Armenia from May 24-30

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Junior Armenian cycling team members supporting the CRD as they ride.

The Bike for Hope for Armenia group of cyclists rode in a Bike-a-thon called the *Spectacular Armenia Ride* from May 24-30 to support the scientists of the Cosmic Ray Division (CRD) of the Yerevan Physics Institute (YerPhi). Riders from the United States included Jamie Kolar, a Los Angeles firefighter medic and Birthright participant, who founded *Aid to Armenia* and spent a year on sabbatical in Armenia teaching the latest first aid techniques to medics, schools, and village residents in Armenia; Roffi Petrossian from Seattle who is also on a year of discovery in Armenia volunteering on many environmental projects such as planting trees for ATP, video graphing for Civilinet, applying to the AUA program on Armenia's Birds of Prey; and Anahid Yeremian, a particle accelerator physicist at Stanford and co-founder of the Support Committee for Armenia's Cosmic Ray Division. The riders from the US were joined by Rafael Paremuzyan, a physicist at YerPhi and by the junior riders from the Armenian cycling team, including the two time world junior silver medalist, Mher Mkrtchyan. Coordinating the 15 plus riders and 4 support personnel was the ride leader and world renowned master cycling trainer Mr. Albert Soloyan.



YerPhi scientist, Rafayel Paremuzyan who joined the ride.
L.A. firefighter Jamie Kolar and Seattle explorer Roffi Petrossian in the background

For 7 days the riders braved rain, wind and hills of the majestic Armenian landscape from Yerevan to Aparan to Ijevan and Dilijan and Sevan. Camping by rivers and groves of trees, each morning checking for water in the tents, making soup on camp stoves, singing by the bond fire and dancing shurch-bar whenever possible was all part of the activity bonding the group together.

The Armenian Roadway Police skillfully escorted the riders through the congested streets of Yerevan on the first day and back to Republic Square on the last day, delivering the tired riders safely to the finish line. Among those welcoming back the cyclists were the scientists, staff, and the head of the CRD and director of the Yerevan Physics Institute, Prof. Ashot Chilingarian, together with friends and reporters from the local news media.



Some of the riders at the conclusion of the Bike a Thon.
In the middle in blue is the two-time world silver medalist, Mher Mkrtchyan.

At the conclusion of the *Spectacular Armenia Ride*, the cyclists joined the CRD staff and supporters, at CRD's Nor Amberd Research Station on Mt. Aragats for a celebration dinner and a tour of the facility. Some youth in the cycling team said they were inspired to do well in the science classes and maybe one day become scientists themselves. For their turn the scientists were inspired to exercise more and thought more of them might join the ride next year. Prof. Chilingarian said that he has added bicycle parking stalls at the Yerevan Physics Institute to encourage the scientists to come to work on their bicycles.



Cycling team members learning about cosmic ray physics at the Nor Amberd research center.



World-renowned cycling coach, Albert Soloyan, proudly displaying the cake his athletes surprised him with. The Caption reads: "Albert Soloyan, our Favorite Coach".

The celebration dinner included a recognition of decades of service of two of Armenia's talented and inspiring leaders in their field: Mr. Albert Soloyan who has trained many cycling world champions in Armenia and abroad and breathed a breath of fresh air into Armenia's cycling tradition after the independence and Prof. Ashot Chilingarian who has brought life back to the Yerevan Physics Institute and its Cosmic Ray Division by encouraging and supporting Armenian youth to satisfy their scientific passion in Armenia.