

# Ukraine to open Chernobyl zone to tourists

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KIEV, Ukraine - Want a better understanding of the world's worst nuclear disaster? Come tour the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

Beginning next year, Ukraine plans to open the sealed zone around the Chernobyl reactor so visitors can learn more about the tragedy of nearly a quarter of a century ago, the Emergency Situations Ministry said yesterday.

Chernobyl's reactor No. 4 exploded on April 26, 1986, spewing radiation over a large swath of northern [Europe](#). Hundreds of thousands of people were resettled from areas contaminated with radiation fallout in Ukraine, [Belarus](#) and Russia. Related health problems persist today.

Visitors have been prohibited in the so-called exclusion zone, a 30-mile radius from the reactor.

Today, about 2,500 employees maintain what remains of the plant, working in shifts to minimize exposure to radiation. Several hundred evacuees have returned despite a government ban. A few firms offer tours to the area, but those tours are illegal and safety is not guaranteed.

A date when the official tours are to begin has not been given.

UN Development Program chief [Helen Clark](#) toured the plant Sunday and said it could tell an important lesson about nuclear safety. - AP

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