The Race to Build the World's Greatest Supercomputer

Atlas Obscura

For the past two years, since June 2013, the top supercomputer in the world has been Tianhe-2. (Its name translates to Sky River—the Milky Way.) Tianhe-2 lives in Guangzhou, China, and on a benchmark test, it reached 33.86 petaflop per second. A petaflop is a measure of how fast a computer can perform—one petaflop/s is one thousand trillion operations, performed in an instant.

But Tianhe-2 may not stay at the top for long. This spring, the United States' Department of Energy announced that it was going to spend $200 million to build the fastest supercomputer in the world, by 2018. And when that supercomputer, Aurora, first starts up, there's no guarantee that it'll be on top for long, either.

All around the world, countries are competing to create the world's most powerful supercomputer—and to be the first to break into the next order of magnitude of performance, the exascale.

Read full article here.

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