



**Ambassador Osius, (center) in red jacket, leads embassy bicyclists on a four-day trek in Ha Giang province, Vietnam. Department of State**

## FOCUS

### Biking for Diplomacy

This year marked the 200th birthday of the modern bicycle.

The U.S. Department of State's diplomats explore ways to strengthen the relationship between the United States and the host country. Bicycling can provide incredible opportunities for diplomatic engagement, thanks to the slower pace which allows more in-depth interaction with local communities.

One leading bicycle diplomat is the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, Ted Osius. He regularly rides through the cities and countryside to meet the local residents. In March 2017, he led embassy bicyclists on a four-day trek in Ha Giang province to meet with students, local government, and highlight the eco-tourism opportunities in the region.

Also in Southeast Asia, U.S. Embassy Seoul has a dedicated "bike diplomacy" team. They promote their rides on Twitter with #bikediplomacy, and have even partnered with the host country, the Republic of Korea, to host a bicycle ride to some of the venues that will be used in the 2018 Olympics in PyeongChang. The ride is an opportunity for cultural exchange on a more local level.

The U.S. Department of State's global educational and cultural outreach also includes bicycling. The Department and ESPNW partner together on a Global Sports Mentoring Program for women across the globe. One recent participant, Batoul Arnaout,

is a cyclist in Jordan. She used what she learned on her exchange program in the United States to start an initiative – BOOST, or Better Options and Opportunities for Sports Today – in Jordan to empower underserved communities.

Everyday cycling also helps support local communities, reducing air pollution and traffic, while promoting wellness. Our facilities across the world are working to promote bicycling as a mode of everyday transport. The U.S. Mission in Geneva manages a fleet of electric bicycles, or "eBikes," which staff use to get to meetings around town. The staff even developed a cloud-based iPad app to easily reserve an eBike and show real-time status updates on the fleet's availability.

In Washington, D.C., traveling by bike is so popular with Department of State employees that the Capital BikeShare docking stations closest to Department buildings are regularly 100 percent utilized. Thanks to a great partnership with the District of Columbia, the Department recently joined with its Harry S Truman building neighbors, the American Pharmacists Association and the National Academies of Sciences, to celebrate the installation of a new Capital BikeShare docking station at 22nd and Constitution Ave NW.



Learn more about the State Department's efforts to make diplomacy power environmental innovation at: <http://state.gov/ecodiplomacy>, or follow us on Twitter @StateGDI.