International Travel Guidelines

posit::conf(2025) International Travel Guidelines

In light of recent events, the Security and People Ops teams have created the guidance below to help you prepare for travel to the United States for posit::conf(2025).

These guidelines are a best effort approach to a dynamic situation. Please use your own judgment in any situation. They are designed to help people navigate US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) procedures and minimize potential issues, particularly concerning device searches, detainment, and the impact of personal views. It's important to understand that CBP has broad authority to search individuals and their belongings at the border.

Important Considerations

Data Privacy: US data privacy laws may differ from those in your home country. Be aware that data on your devices may not be protected to the same extent.

Evolving Political Climate: The political climate and CBP policies can change. Make sure you are up to date on the most recent policies.

Scholar Responsibility: Scholars are responsible for understanding and adhering to applicable laws and regulations. Posit is unable to assist with legal counsel.

Review Travel Guidelines

Review the United States Customs and Border Protection site for the latest travel information and any recent changes: [Know Before You Visit](#)

Visa: If required, ensure you possess a valid visa for your travel purpose. Ensure it is valid for a business-related trip. Verify that it will remain valid for the duration of your stay. If possible, consider applying for the ESTA program. [Official ESTA Application Website, U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

Travel guidelines vary by country, review any resources that your home country's embassy or government has published.

Additional Resources

Supporting Documentation

Having documents such as copies of your passport, visa, travel insurance, and emergency contact information can expedite processes if your original documents are lost or confiscated. Having proof of onward travel and accommodation can help satisfy immigration requirements and potentially avoid unnecessary scrutiny or suspicion. These documents can serve as crucial backup and verification in potentially challenging situations.

Ensure you have supporting documentation: Carry all necessary documents in both physical and digital formats (in English):
- Valid passport with at least six months of validity remaining
- Visa (if applicable)
- Travel itinerary including round-trip flight details
- Emergency contact information
- Invitation Letter
- Conference registration
- Hotel reservation(s)

Travel Itinerary: Have a clear and concise explanation of your trip's purpose. Be prepared to articulate this to CBP officers.

Necessary Items Only: Pack only what you need for your trip. Avoid carrying sensitive, controversial, or illegal items into the US. This includes, but is not limited to:
- Items that could be considered politically sensitive, offensive, or inappropriate.
- Illegal substances or prohibited or restricted items as per US Customs and Border Protection regulations.

Prohibited and Restricted Items

Medications: Ensure you are carrying valid prescriptions or a doctor's note (in English) for any medications and that they are legal and FDA-approved in the US.

CBP Customer Service

Pre-Travel Device and Data Preparation

Preparing your electronic devices before traveling is crucial for safeguarding your data and security. By backing up your important information and then removing sensitive or non-essential data from your devices, you reduce the potential harm if your phone or computer is inspected, confiscated, or compromised. Taking these precautions minimizes your digital footprint and helps protect your privacy in an environment where it might be at greater risk.

Data Minimization and Backup

Data Backup: Back up all data on your electronic devices before departure in case the device is seized. Limit the data stored on the device to only what is absolutely necessary for the trip.

Remove Biometrics: Disable biometric authentication (fingerprint, facial recognition) and use strong passwords instead. In the US, law enforcement may be able to compel individuals to unlock devices using biometrics without their consent.

Remove Sensitive Personal Information: Remove any sensitive personal information, including:

- Personal photos and videos
- Private communications (texts, emails)
- Financial information
- Medical records
- Passwords, password managers, or written credentials
- Social media apps (log out and/or delete the app temporarily)
- Any content that could be considered controversial or offensive

Consider using a burner or travel phone while traveling.

Social Media Review

Review your social media to ensure that you are aware of any public posts you have made that the current US government may find to be against US policy or interests. You may be detained, asked to explain, or rejected for entry based on your social media accounts.

Upon Arrival - Navigating US Customs and Border Protection

Legal Considerations

Understand that CBP has broad authority to search individuals and their belongings at the border, even without a warrant. Travelers have limited legal recourse at the border. Refusal to cooperate may lead to device seizure or denial of entry (for non-US citizens).

General Conduct

- **Be Polite and Cooperative:** Always remain calm, polite, and cooperative with CBP officers.
- **Be Truthful:** Answer all questions clearly, concisely, and truthfully. Avoid being evasive or providing more information than necessary. Declare all items you are carrying, including gifts.
- **State the Purpose of Travel:** Clearly and accurately state the purpose of your trip: to attend Posit's annual data science conference. Do not just say you are entering for "work".
- **Present Documentation:** Have all required travel documents readily available for inspection.

Personal Beliefs

- **Avoid Discussion:** Refrain from discussing personal political views, religious beliefs, or social opinions with CBP officers.
- **Neutral Demeanor:** Maintain a neutral and professional demeanor.
- **Social Media:** Be aware that CBP may review social media accounts even if you do not provide a username or access. It can help to ensure that your online presence does not contain anything that could be misconstrued or cause issues.

Device Search and Seizure

If asked to unlock your device

- Remain calm and cooperate with the search, but do not volunteer additional information.
- Do not consent to downloading any new software.
- If they install software or plug in a device, document any relevant information (if possible).

If your device is searched

If a device is searched, document the following:

- Date and time of the search.
- CBP officer's name and badge number (if possible).
- Details of what was searched and any data that was accessed.
- Keep track of whether the device was ever out of your field of vision at any time.

If your device is seized

If a device is seized, document the following:

- Date and time of the search.
- CBP officer's name and badge number (if possible).
- Obtain a receipt with details of the device and contact information.
- Inquire about the reason for detention and expected return time.

If You Are Detained

If you are told you are being detained:

- **Remain Calm:** If detained, remain calm and ask for the reason for detention.
- **Request Consular Notification and Access:** Notify them of your Citizenship and that you are formally requesting Consular Notification and Access.
- **Request Legal Counsel:** Request the opportunity to contact the legal counsel as soon as possible. Posit is unable to assist with this.
- **Inform of Desire to Return:** Inform them of your desire to return home at your own expense rather than being held until a US-funded return flight is available. Posit will reimburse you for this emergency return travel.
- **Do Not Sign Anything:** Do not sign any documents without consulting with legal counsel or an embassy official.