

Travel Abroad Information Session

May 2025

Travel Abroad Information Session

Topic	Speaker
Personal Travel Safety and Security	Todd Holmes, Program Manager, Int'l Safety and Security MIT Emergency Management
Research Security and Export Control	Greg Moffatt, Chief Research Compliance Officer Office of the VP for Research
Interactions at Airports and International Borders	Matthew Fucci, Counsel Office of the General Counsel
Electronic Device Security and Loaner Program	Kyle Filipe, Director of IT Support Services IS&T
Other Resources	Magdalene Lee, Director of Global Support Office of the Vice Provost for International Activities



Personal Travel Safety and Security

Todd Holmes

Program Manager, International Safety and Security

MIT Emergency Management

Prepare

1. MIT Travel Risk Policies + Registry

- **Students**
 - Check High-Risk Travel Destinations list on the Global Support Resources site under Travel & Safety Abroad
- **Employees: Faculty and Staff**
 - No restrictions on locations; however certain war/conflict countries may require additional insurance. Check with insurance.mit.edu
- **MIT Travel Registry:** travel.mit.edu
 - Register trip information including location, dates, contact info
 - To register a group of travelers as a cohort, program administrators should use travel-admin.mit.edu. Email travel-registry@mit.edu for access

2. U.S. State Department

- Check travel risk & country information: travel.state.gov
- Sign up for State Department's STEP (U.S. citizens): mytravel.state.gov/s/step
- Register trip information including location, dates, contact info

Prepare

3. International SOS (ISOS): myportal.internationalsos.com

- Requires **MIT SSO authentication**



What is International SOS? MIT's contracted provider for medical/security information & assistance globally 24/7 (outside the U.S.) It is **not insurance**

- Save the global assistance number in phone contacts: **+1-215-942-8478**
 - Call direct/collect
 - Speak to ISOS for a pre-trip briefing
 - Request a (medical) interpreter over the phone if needed
- **Download the app** to your smart phone: app.internationalsos.com
 - Live Chat feature available over wireless

Prepare

4. MIT Health Travel Consultation

- Contact [MIT Travel Health Clinic](#), ideally eight weeks prior to travel
- Gather information: Itinerary, Immunization records, [CDC travelers' health](#) info

5. Health Insurance

- **Students:** Check insurance.mit.edu for information on up to \$100K international emergency health insurance provided by MIT, coordinated through ISOS
- **Faculty/Staff:** Review coverage with your own providers. MIT Health plan subscribers, carefully review MIT Human Resources [international travel information](#)

6. (Tele)Communications

- Don't rely exclusively on wireless networks in case of emergency; know telecomms infrastructure of location
- Identify local trusted contacts as back ups
- Get a local number/SIM if you don't have international roaming

While You're Abroad

7. Transportation Safety

- Driving in foreign countries is discouraged; some MIT programs prohibit it
- Mind road safety (e.g., seatbelts, emergency kits, etc.)
- Safety of ride sharing providers varies by location, ISOS can advise

8. Accommodation & Location Safety

- ISOS can provide accommodation and location specific safety advice
- General advice:
 - Check for fire exits, fire safety, lighting
 - Secure locks
 - Access monitoring and building security
 - Ask for program or host recommendations
 - Beware of potential online fraud

While You're Abroad

9. Be a Hard Target

- Be alert/aware of surroundings, particularly in crowds
- Avoid solo travel (buddy system), be more careful at night
- Carry a mugger's wallet
- Additional recommendations vary by location, ISOS can assist and advise

10. Emergencies

- While abroad, contact ISOS in the event of an emergency (they will notify MIT)
 - **Medical emergency:** to locate the nearest medical facility and get help with follow-up and support services, if needed
 - **Natural disaster** (both pre/post event) or a **political type event** such as civil unrest: to provide immediate advice
 - **Security/criminal event**, such as assault or robbery: for help on contacting local resources

Questions?

Please contact Todd Holmes: mittravelsafety@mit.edu

A faint, light gray world map is visible in the background of the slide, centered behind the text.

Research Security and Export Control

Greg Moffatt

Chief Research Compliance Officer

Office of the VP for Research

Prior to Travel

Researchers should consider - do you want to engage?

- Engagement with some institutions and individuals are restricted by U.S. government. (For reasons related to export control, sanctions, entity lists, etc.)
- Additionally, there are countries of concern for research security purposes.
- These are not always obvious, but we can help.

Background – Export Control and Other Restrictions

Export Control

- Due to foreign policy and national security concerns, U.S. government has export control regulations in place. Controls vary by country, institutions, etc. and can restrict what is exported. Restrictions can be non-obvious.
- Engagements with colleagues outside the U.S. are subject to export control laws. Everything that crosses the U.S. border is considered an export: Products, equipment, materials, software, technology, information, and “services.”*
- However, publicly available information and **results** of fundamental research are generally not covered by export control regulations.

Other Restrictions

Interactions with certain international entities and persons are restricted

Sanctions by Statute or Executive Order:

- Iran, N. Korea, Syria, Russia-controlled Crimea, Cuba
- Other countries of concern: Russia, Belarus, Russia-occupied Ukraine areas, and Venezuela**

Denied/restricted party restrictions:

- Prohibitions are specific to persons or institutions—Entity and Unverified List (imposes individual export licensing requirements that are not otherwise in place)
- Specially Designated Nationals (SDNs), etc.

General Travel Advice

Laptops/Mobile Phones

- Don't take anything controlled with you
- In presenting, stick to previously published material
- Be aware of what kind of data you receive through your mobile phone
- Retain “effective control” over phones, laptops, etc. (on your person, in hotel safe, etc. Checked baggage is NOT deemed to constitute effective control.)

Other Equipment and Materials

- It is strongly advised to ship material --through third-party carriers to ensure proper compliance with EHS regulations, export control clearances, liability if items are damaged, and other procedures.
- Shipping with intermediate stops can be an export to those countries!

Field Work

- University research activity done outside the U.S. may not qualify for the Fundamental Research Exclusion. Any physical items or prototype deployed in a foreign country is an export – please contact export control for assistance.

For More Details:

<https://research.mit.edu/security-integrity-and-compliance/export-control/scholarly-activities/international-travel>

We Can Help – Please Contact Us

When:

- Traveling to a high-risk country (check [U.S. State Department Travel Advisories](#) and/or the Export Control Office)
- Considering an informal collaboration* with person or entity in high-risk country
- Taking technology (physical item or prototype) with you anywhere out of the country
- Anytime you have concerns or questions

How:

- Contact the Export Control Office: exportcontrolhelp@mit.edu
 - Janet C. Johnston (978-590-0974); Kate Donovan (617-715-2886)
 - <https://research.mit.edu/security-integrity-and-compliance/export-control>
- Use the Informal International Collaborations tool: <https://iic.mit.edu/iic/#/home>



Interactions at Airports and International Borders

Matthew Fucci
Counsel
Office of the General Counsel

Researchers Are Getting Stopped at Airports and Borders

We observe that the majority of prolonged border stoppages for researchers and students are a result of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents questioning either:

1. **Data** or other information related to the traveler's area of research contained on electronic devices or
2. **Research materials or specialized equipment** being carried by the traveler

How to Reduce Your Risk at the Border

Carry only what you need

- Contact your local IT support provider or IS&T to ask for a **loaner laptop and/or mobile device** that can be configured with minimum software and data needed
- Instead of hand-carrying research materials or specialized equipment, you should **ship research materials and equipment separately to your destination**

Additional Documentation

- You may also choose to secure and carry with you **a letter from your supervisor or department head** noting the data you may be traveling with and the purpose of taking it abroad
- This letter helps answer questions a CBP agent or other border agent may ask and gives them **a contact person at MIT to verify the information**
- A sample letter is available on the OGC website: <https://ogc.mit.edu/template-travel-authorization-letter>

If You Get Stopped and Questioned in the U.S.

(Laws Elsewhere Vary)

- CBP agents do not need a special reason to search or question you at the border
- Not a criminal detention, so **you do not have the right to contact an attorney** (unless you are being placed under arrest)
- **You do not have to assist in a search** by giving device passwords (although CBP may seize your devices); You have right to remain silent
- **Ask for a receipt** if CBP seizes a device (which they may retain for weeks or months)
- Failure to cooperate may affect immigration or visa process for non-U.S. persons

More Details Available on OGC Website

<https://ogc.mit.edu/practice-areas/international-activities/special-topics-immigration-and-international-travel>

- PDF “pocket reference cards” available with key points that can be carried when traveling

<https://ogc.mit.edu/template-travel-authorization-letter>

A light gray world map is visible in the background, centered on the Atlantic Ocean. The continents of North America, South America, Europe, and Africa are clearly outlined.

Device Security and Loaner Program

Kyle Filipe

Director of IT Support Services

IS&T

Secure Data Travel Recommendations – Highlights

Before Travel:

- Backup your data. IS&T makes [CrashPlan](#) available for free to the community
- If don't have currently: [encrypt](#) your devices; install security applications ([Crowdstrike](#), [Sophos](#), [VPN client](#))
- Bring the least amount of information and data on the fewest devices possible. Store potentially sensitive material on an encrypted flash drive
- Consider new loaner device program (more to come)

During Travel:

- Use [MIT's VPN](#) (if not prohibited) to create a more secure connection between your devices and the resources you need to access
- Do not use unknown USB drives
- Avoid downloading and using apps that sync data, and instead use outlook.com or owa.mit.edu for email, Dropbox on the web, etc.

After Travel:

- If you traveled with a loaner device, or wiped your devices before traveling:
 - Copy any data you've modified onto an external drive
 - Scan the data for viruses. IS&T makes [Sophos](#) anti-virus software available for free for the community
- Reset passwords

FREE Loaner Device Program

Why should I borrow loaner devices?

- Using loaner device is more straightforward than the complex process of configuring your personal device
- Devices are already configured with settings to achieve a more secure computing experience
- Less risk with loss/theft or confiscation. IS&T can lock or wipe the devices to protect the data they contain under certain scenarios

What devices are being offered?

- Travelers may request up to one laptop, one tablet, and one phone (free cellular data plans available if needed)
- A base suite of apps are currently installed on all issued devices. Additional apps may be added to devices upon request; we are flexible and will review all app requests to ensure the devices are able to support your work

Who can borrow devices?

- Faculty, staff, and students

When should I borrow devices?

- Can borrow anytime you are traveling abroad (business or personal) and encourage this
- MIT **strongly recommends** borrowing devices when traveling to any destination with a **Level 3 or higher** travel advisory [designated by the U.S. Department of State](#)

How do I submit a request?

- Visit IS&T's [Secure Devices for International Travel](#) website to learn more and submit your request

Additional IT Guidance

- [Travel and Technology guidance](#) in the Knowledge Base
- [Secure Travel Recommendations](#) for “High Risk” destinations
- [Secure Devices for International Travel](#) IS&T loaner program
- [Protecting Information at MIT](#)

Questions? Email ist-loaners@mit.edu

KB The Knowledge Base

[Home](#) [Edit](#) [View](#) [Watch](#) [Comment](#) [History](#)

Travel and Technology Landing Page

On this page:

- Overview
 - Before you travel
 - ✓ Back up your laptop
 - ✓ Back up your mobile device
 - ✓ Secure your computer...
 - ✓ ... and its data
 - ✓ Test your software
 - ✓ Plan for connectivity
 - ✓ Check all necessary chargers and cables
 - ✓ Update voicemail greetings and e-mail auto-responders
 - ✓ Have a "Plan B"
 - While traveling
 - ✓ Never leave your device unattended
 - ✓ Whenever possible use the MIT VPN client
 - ✓ Check your mobile device settings
 - After you travel
 - ✓ Perform a full virus-scan of your computer
 - ✓ Reset any e-mail automatic replies or voicemail greetings
 - International travel considerations
 - Resources
 - See also



Other Resources

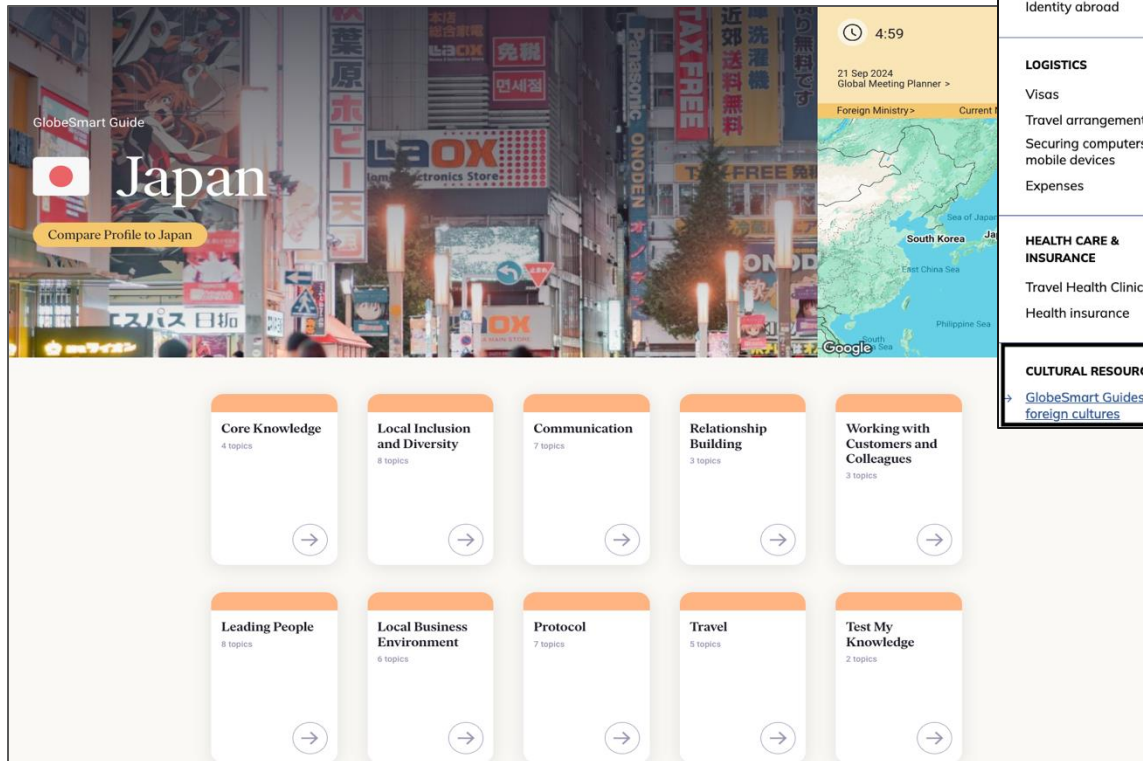
Magdalene Lee

Director of Global Support

Office of the Vice Provost for International Activities

Cultural Resources - GlobeSmart

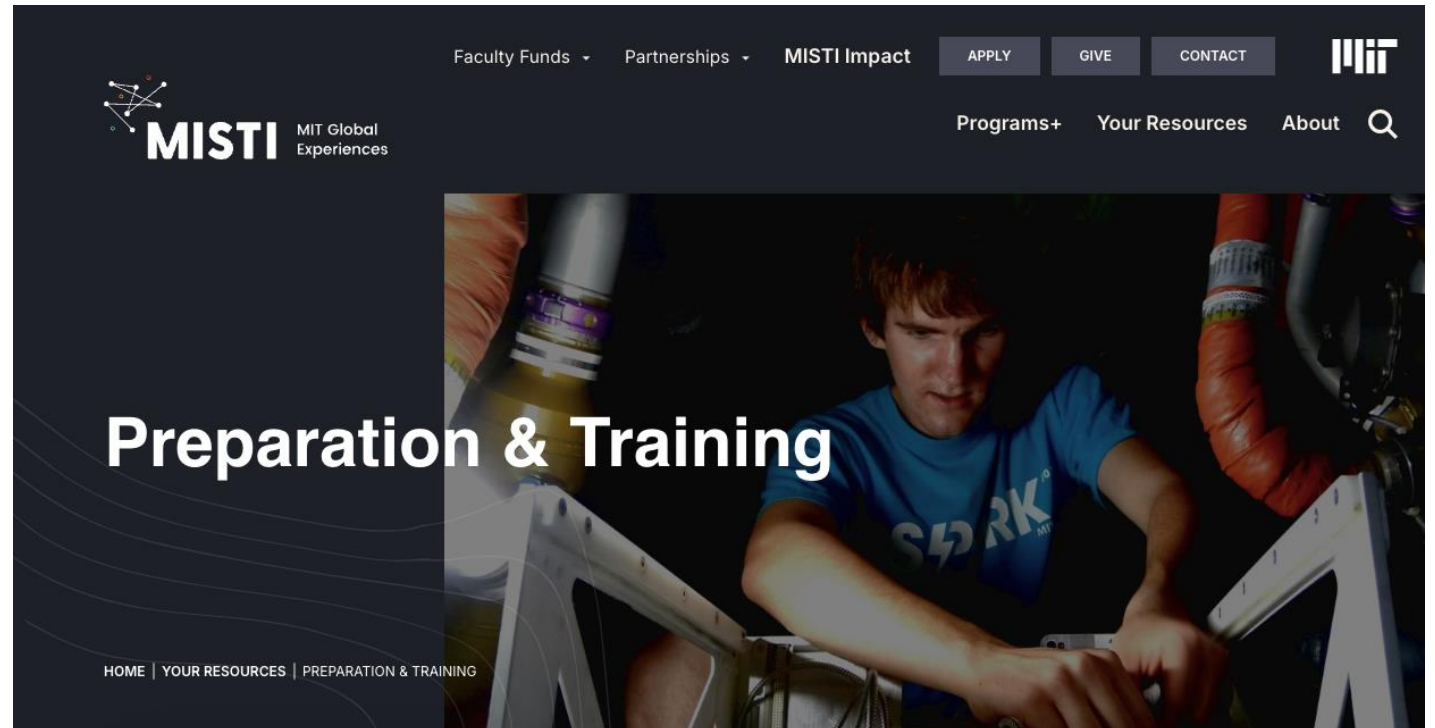
MIT has licensed Aperian's **GlobeSmart** (globesmart.mit.edu), an online resource to help enhance cultural awareness.



Resources for Sending Students Abroad

MISTI can help with:

- **Global education know-how:**
 - Help you navigate the challenges of sending students abroad
- **Student preparation:**
 - MISTI's extensive health and safety training is available to all members of the community via their [app](#) (password misti)
 - Their 17 [program managers](#) can also provide country-specific one-on-one sessions



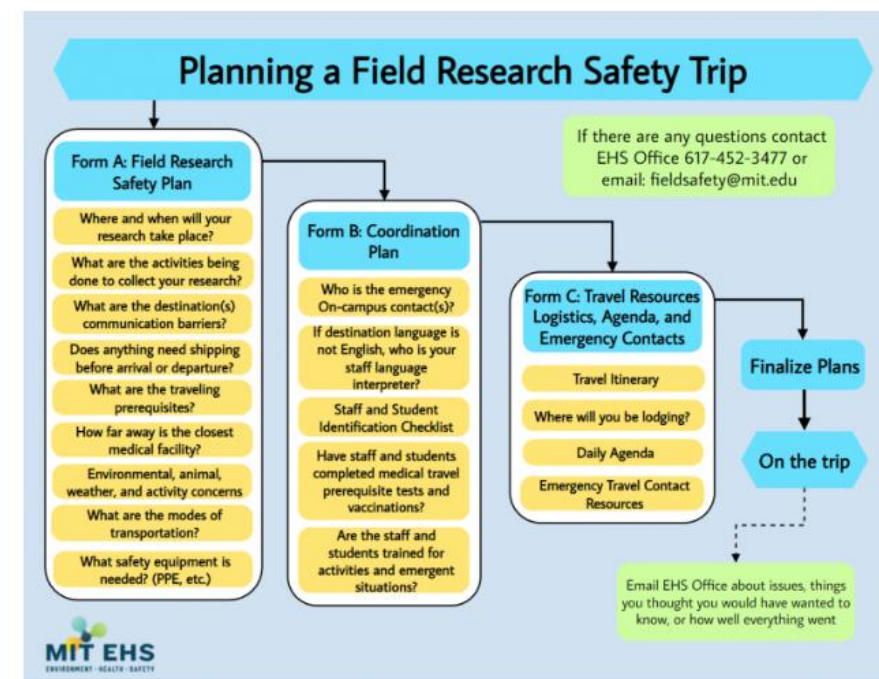
EHS Field Activity Resources

EHS can help determine your field activity safety needs and provide planning information and factsheets. (ehs.mit.edu)

Email: Fieldsafety@MIT.EDU

The screenshot shows the MIT EHS website's 'Field Research Safety' page. The header includes the MIT EHS logo and navigation links for 'About', 'Biological', 'Chemical', 'Radiological', 'Lab & Research' (highlighted), and 'Safe & Sustainable'. The main heading is 'Field Research Safety' with a subtext: 'The dynamic nature of field work at MIT requires our field safety hazards and emergencies.' Below this is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Lab & Research > Field Research Safety'. The 'Responsibilities' section states: 'Safe and successful fieldwork is the responsibility of everyone involved in the experience as well as additional MIT provided resources. Below are the roles that all field research is done as safely as possible with minimal adverse impact.' It lists four roles with plus icons: 'Professor, Instructors, and/or Trip Organizer', 'Trip Participants', 'MIT EHS Office', and 'Departments, Labs, and/or Centers EHS'. The 'Planning and Preparation' section is partially visible at the bottom.

Figure 1: Planning a Field Research Trip Flow Chart



Thank you

Thank you for your time!

An overview of the information presented can be found at the **MIT Global Support Resources** website (aggregator of international topics and information at MIT). A copy of the slides and link to a recording of today's session will also be posted there.

Website: gsr.mit.edu

Email: internationalhelp@mit.edu

We would like your feedback to improve this program.



A screenshot of the MIT Global Support Resources website. The page has a dark blue header with the MIT logo and a search icon. A left sidebar contains a navigation menu with categories like "Travel & safety abroad", "SAFETY ABROAD", "LOGISTICS", "HEALTH CARE & INSURANCE", "CULTURAL RESOURCES", "Project planning", "Managing project risk", "HR, finance & admin", "About", and "Contact". The main content area features a large heading "Start smart on international engagements" followed by a paragraph about the website's purpose. Below this are two circular images: one showing flags and another showing a world map. To the right of the world map is a red-bordered box containing the text "Travel abroad information session". At the bottom of the page is a "GET HELP WITH:" section with a grid of icons and text links. The first link, "Preparing to travel abroad", is highlighted with a red box. Other links include "Mitigating project risk", "Initiating an international agreement", "Hosting visitors at MIT", "Preparing for a field visit", "Accessing GlobeSmart culture guides (over 100 countries)", "Working or hiring abroad", and "Sending students abroad". A footer at the bottom right says "Not sure where to start? REACH OUT TO ONE OF OUR EXPERTS".