

Title:

How to Select a Voltage Converter for Your Next Trip Overseas

Word Count:

634

Summary:

Traveling overseas? Learn about voltage converters and why you might need one....

Keywords:

voltage converter, voltage transformer, 110v to 220v 110 220 volts,110220volts tv, vcr, dvd and voltage converter

Article Body:

Whether you live in the United States, Canada, Mexico, or on another continent, traveling overseas can pose problems when taking along electrical appliances because of voltage differences in various countries around the world.

When taking an extended vacation, there are some electrical items you just can't live without. Needed items may include battery chargers (for cell phones, digital cameras, and other portable items), hairdryer, electric shaver, radio, curlers, iron, VCR, and DVD player. Without a proper voltage match, you could permanently damage your electrical product when plugging it into a power source.

Understand Voltage Differences before You Go

It's a good idea to research voltage differences before traveling. Some countries have an across-the-board standard of 110 volts while others have a standard voltage of 220. For example, North American countries as well as parts of South and Central America, the Pacific and Caribbean operate on 110 volts. Other countries around the world operate on 220 volts, while some countries have both 110 and 220 voltage.

If you're traveling from the United States (with a 110 volt standard) to Europe, and the area you plan to visit only uses 220 volts, you will need an 110v to 220v voltage converter, also called a step up voltage converter. On the other hand, if you are traveling from a country in Europe that has a 220 volt standard to the United States, you will need a 220v to 110v voltage converter, or a step down voltage converter.

What is a Voltage Converter or Voltage Transformer?

A voltage converter is a device used to convert the voltage of a power source to create a usable - and safe - power supply. Another word often used for voltage converter is voltage transformer although there are actually differences between the two. A voltage transformer is usually bigger in size and is designed for longer, continued use. A voltage converter will usually either double or cut in half the voltage, but some converters can do both.

Voltage converters usually come with plug end adapters that enable the conversion of the shape and size of the plug's end. The plug adapter can be used without the converter if no voltage conversion is needed. It's a good idea to carry with you a variety of plug end adapters because some countries have many different types of outlets. For example, some areas do not use the flat prong outlet that's used in the United States.

Frequency Gaps - Cycle Mishaps

Some countries not only have voltage differences, but also frequency (cycles per second) differences. Many electrical appliances are not affected by this difference; however, some are such as clocks, espresso makers, and other timed products. A clock, for instance, may not keep time properly if there's a frequency difference. Also, it's not recommended to use voltage transformers with heat-making products such as steamers, small electric heaters, or coffee heaters. Some hotels forbid the use of certain electrical appliances, so check with the hotel to be sure you can bring the items along.

VCR and DVD Voltage Converters

If you plan to take along a VCR or DVD player, there are several options. You'll need a voltage converter with most regular video or DVD players. There are, however, innovative code free (region free) DVD players that offer voltage capabilities for 110 volts and 220 volts. These won't need a voltage converter because it's built in. Keep in mind that using a voltage converter usually won't work if there are frequency differences or format differences with the provided television set. Find out in advance if there will be problems so you can prepare.

When buying a voltage converter or transformer, first find out what type of conversion you will need - step up or step down. Most online electronics outlets offer many different types of 110/220 volts converters, transformers, and plug adapters so you can easily find affordable solutions when you travel.