



Best portable solar panels for camping

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The Best Solar Panels for Camping

The 10 Best Portable Solar Panels (Reviewed by An Electrical Engineer)

Naturally, the effectiveness of a solar panel largely depends on the weather -- a panel performs much faster when the sun is shining and you've positioned the panel at the optimal angle so that it can rapidly soak up the sun's rays. But they also work (albeit more slowly) on overcast days. Leaving weather aside, the effectiveness is largely dictated by the efficiency rate (usually between 18 and 23 percent). And the wattage should also be considered based on what you're looking to charge.

Another important consideration: whether or not the solar panel has an integrated battery or power pack, which lets you charge the battery, so you can use it at night. These panels support scenarios like backpacking or hiking with the panel strapped to your pack, and then charging your devices once you've set up camp. Panels without that feature simply means you need to just charge the devices directly from the panels when they're set up, or that you use the panels to fuel a portable power bank.

The optimal amount of wattage you want in a solar panel should be dictated by what you're looking to charge. Small devices may only need five watts while larger devices like laptops may require a larger panel in the 100-watt range. If you're looking to power a lot of devices and to fuel a stand-alone power bank, consider portable panels with 200 watts or more. For these higher-output circumstances, you can also use multiple panels to increase the speed at which the power banks get fueled.

Five watts should be plenty for charging a cell phone, which lets you consider panels that are lighter, more portable, and pack down into smaller packages than those used to charge higher-output devices.

Travel + Leisure / Alli Waataja

This panel unfolds and sets up quickly, a sundial helps find the optimal angle, and two USB ports lets you charge larger devices easily.

At 9.5 pounds, and with a packed size of 20 x 14 inches, it may prove to be too big and heavy for light packers.

Weighing in at only 0.9 pounds and outfitted with an onboard battery so you can store energy for charging later.

At only 5 watts, it's limited to charging smaller devices.



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The panel provides 200 watts of charging power, sets up quickly, and charges multiple devices at remarkable speeds -- and it works with other panels and power stations.

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