



Solar panel kits for narrowboats

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Installing solar panels on a narrowboat is a great way to keep your leisure and engine batteries charged up ready for use. The solar panel will enhance your time aboard by providing additional power, free of charge.

So how do you fit a solar panel to your narrowboat and what do you need? Selecting a solar panel system is very straightforward and we will now guide you through the process.

So how do you go about fitting a solar panel? If you have reasonable DIY skills and a little time to spare, fitting a solar panel will be straightforward. We will guide you through the installation step by step.

There are two types of solar panel suitable for use on a canal boat or narrowboat. Both can be fitted easily to curved decks or cabin tops.

The most commonly used solar panels for narrowboats have rigid aluminium frames. These panels are very sturdy and are protected by a toughened glass front. You will have probably seen lots of these on other boats. Consequently they are the least expensive type of panel and are a good choice in most situations.

Your solar panel will perform at its best in full sunshine. If your boat never moves from its mooring fit the solar panel on the cabin-top facing South and tilt it up to face the Sun. Tilting the panel up at an angle can provide up to 50% more electricity. These fully adjustable frames can be tilted by up to 90 degrees.

The second type of panel is the semi-flexible solar panel. These panels are only 3 mm thick and are built on an encapsulated aluminium laminate for thermal stability. The top surface is made of an abrasion resistant ETFE layer. The resulting panel is very weather resistant and remarkably flexible. We recommend you use these panels on curved surfaces such as your cabin top or on top of your wheelhouse. They are usually glued in place but can also be tied in place with light cords or elastic. They have the advantage that they will not get in the way of mooring lines and other ropes.

Whichever type you choose, make sure it has 'monocrystalline' solar cells. These cells provide the highest output for the size of panel.

If you move from location to location, fit the panel somewhere on the cabin-top where it can benefit from all-round sunlight.

Furthermore, keep it away from anything that might obstruct the light such as deck equipment and chimney pipes.



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Keep in mind that solar panels are relatively fragile and generally cannot be walked on. So keep them away from areas that have a lot of foot traffic! If you do need to walk on your solar panels consider fitting a marine grade semi-flexible panel.

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