



Solar power generator for camping

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Mike Richard has traveled the world since 2008. He's kayaked in Antarctica, tracked endangered African wild dogs in South Africa, and survived a near-miss great white shark attack in Mexico. His travel advice has appeared on the websites for Forbes, Travel + Leisure, CNET, and National Geographic. He loves the great outdoors and good bourbon, and (usually) calls Tulsa, Oklahoma home. Mike also enjoys speaking in the third person.

For everything from small tech gadgets to full-blown kitchen appliances, these will keep you powered up for days.

Jackery's wildly popular Power Station Explorer 500 is arguably the "gateway drug" for most power enthusiasts looking for their first solar generator or portable power bank. It boasts a solid, 518Wh capacity and a 500W output (with a 1,000-watt surge capacity)--sufficient for keeping most average car campers going for a weekend away. It's the perfect balance of capacity, peak output, port selection, and price. At 13 pounds and roughly the size of a basketball, it's ideal for everything from car camping to picnics to days at the beach.

We've personally tested several Jackery solar generators and the build quality and durability are industry-leading. They really do live up to the hype. So, too, does the Explorer 500--a model we've used more than perhaps any other on the market. After years of use (and abuse) for everything from car camping to RV'ing for weeks on end, it's held up incredibly well. As long as the battery is maintained (topped up or recharged every 3-6 months), this generator will last for many years.

That said, this solar generator is starting to show its age. It still relies on older lithium-ion battery tech (which has been eclipsed by superior LiFePO4 batteries) and the lack of any USB-C ports are a clear sign that this is a dated model. The fixed (i.e., non-retractable) handle also means it's not stackable, which seems like a frustrating oversight. Still, at around \$400, we think it's a great buy, especially given the Jackery moniker.

What do buyers say? Out of more than 7,500 Amazon reviews, 94% recommend the Jackery Portable Power Station Explorer 500 Solar Generator with at least a 4-star rating.

Judy Power's 1000W/1280Wh Portable Power Station offers a generous 1,280Wh capacity--enough for car campers who regularly venture out with plenty of tech in tow. For home backup purposes, it'll keep most laptops going for at least 12 hours or a heated blanket nice and toasty overnight. The LiFePO4 battery technology is a step up from traditional lithium-ion batteries, promising a longer shelf life and better safety. This fact alone justifies the roughly \$1,000 price tag (although it's frequently on sale for several hundred dollars less).



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Although it might not be everybody's cup of matcha, we think the bright, in-your-face safety orange shell looks cool too. It's a fun and welcome departure from the typical, "utilitarian survivalist/prepper chic" design of most solar generators we've tested.

The 1,280WH LiFePO4 battery is capable of powering most small to mid-sized home electronics and appliances. The number and selection of ports on this solar generator is solid, including all the standards like USB-C, USB-A, 12V cigarette lighter, and traditional AC, so you can plug just about anything into it.

Given its power-to-price ratio, we're hard-pressed to find much to complain about. The case feels well-built, but more like a premium home electronic than a rugged "grab-and-go" overlander-friendly solar generator.

What do buyers say? "Have tested the power station, works well, I'm sure I'll own it for years to come, I'm a happy camper!" said one Judy reviewer.

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