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Which watt for what?

Do you get lost when trying to figure out how to keep your phone, headtorch, or GoPro powered up while out in the sticks? On this week's episode of the Snowys Camping Show, gear gurus Ben and Lauren take you through all you need to know. Whether you're kayaking, hiking, or backpacking, they'll talk you through your solar options, power banks, batteries, how to work out your power requirements, and the best ways to conserve battery life. Check out below for all that, plus more.

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Mentioned in this Episode:

Products:

[Lightweight portable power packs](#)

[Rechargeable headlamps](#)

[PETZL rechargeable battery](#)

[MPOWERD Luci lanterns](#)

[BioLite CampStove 2+](#)

[Black Diamond Moji Charging Station](#)

Blogs:

[Hiking the Larapinta Trail – Not Just For the Young \(by Kevin Leslie\)](#)

What Devices do You Actually Need?

The first consideration is to work out how many devices you will need to use on your adventure. This could include a phone, lantern/headtorch, camera, GoPro, or outdoors/fitness watch. A smartphone has many uses and incorporates multiple devices into one –



communication, camera, navigation, torch, clock, and a playlist if you want to listen to tunes. This one device saves you from having to keep a number of different items charged and with that considered, you'll be able to figure out the best power option for your needs.

Conserving Battery Usage

The best way to extend the battery life of your devices is to conserve your usage. You're not going to need to spend hours a day scrolling on your phone or answering emails on the trail, so it's good to have a realistic expectation of how long you can use your device.

If you have a modern smartphone, fully charged at home and kept on aeroplane mode, it will often get you through 3-4 days before needing a recharge. If you turn off Wi-Fi and Bluetooth that will also significantly reduce battery usage. So those are some techniques you can implement to make your battery last longer.

Lightweight Solar Panels

Lightweight solar panels are an option that you could consider for powering your smaller devices off the grid.

But, there are a few key things about solar panels that you need to know before you make that decision. They are ineffective when exposed to filtered or partial sunlight, so being aware of the weather and the environment in which you are adventuring is important. Consider your constant movement while you hike and how much you change your orientation towards the sun. If you have a solar panel hanging off your pack and are relying on it for powering gear, remember it requires an optimal position to work.

There are also environmental variables that will affect the panel. If your panels are plugged into a phone to charge, for example, your phone will use more energy notifying you of "charging" or "not charging" with the voltage fluctuations, so it won't be worth your while. The only way to offset this would be to charge the phone whilst it's turned off. Generally, a power bank would be a better option.

You will need to weigh up the cost vs how much power you'll get if you take a larger power pack instead of a small power pack and a panel. Also factor in the remoteness and length of your trips.

Some products, like the lightweight hiking lanterns from BioLite or Luci, come with their own built-in solar panel and will be affected by the same issues.



Try to conserve battery so you can recharge less on the trail. Image: Goal Zero

240V Access When Passing Through Towns

On your hike, if you stop in towns or through places that have 240V access, you may not have to take a portable power source at all as you could find locations along the way to charge your phone, such as cafes and public parks. Some trails such as the Larapinta now have solar-powered charging stations for topping up phones and other small electrical devices via USB cables.

Solar Alternatives

There are some products on the market that are multi-purpose and can charge your devices while also serving another vital purpose for hiking. An example of this is the BioLite CampStove 2+ which is an electricity generating wood camp stove. It burns biomass fuel such as twigs and wood pellets which creates heat that generates electricity, providing 5V power to charge your devices. It's got an integrated 3200mAh battery on board that can be charged at home before you leave without the need for turning the stove on too.

Lightweight lanterns from brands like Black Diamond or Goal Zero also have a battery on board that can give your phone or headtorch a boost of power. There are some particular designs that have the option to recharge via solar or hand cranking as well, making them ideal for when you are truly going off the grid.



Rechargeable and Disposable Batteries

Headtorches require some sort of battery, whether it's standard disposables or a rechargeable lithium-ion.

Some models are designed so you can switch out the batteries inside for a compatible rechargeable option from the same brand, which is a great way to reduce your environmental impact. Otherwise, lithium-ion batteries are easily available, though they will need to be charged at home using 240V. Just make sure you leave enough time to do so before your trip as it can take several hours.

The heat and the cold will affect the battery life of your devices, so consider sleeping with devices stashed in your sleeping bag pocket in winter to help the battery hold a charge.

Thanks for listening, tune in again for next week's episode!

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If you have any questions for Ben and Lauren, make sure you head over to our [Facebook group](#) and let us know as we'd love to hear from you.

Catch you out there!