

03 00 2008 - Voltaic Systems: Backpacks Gone Solar

Voltaic's line of solar-equipped bags are great for anyone who spends a lot of time on their computers away from the wonderful world of outlets. With more and more parks around the world beginning to offer free wi-fi connectivity, a way to charge your gadgets while in the middle of Hyde Park is a welcome addition to any green geek on the go.



Voltaic offers two different backpacks (large and small), a messenger bag, and soon a larger briefcase - all of which are made from the company's unique recycled PET material (essentially a soda-bottle composite). Though the backpacks and messenger bag weigh in at a measly 4 watts, they should be able to give your iPod three hours of music for each hour spent in direct sunlight.

In terms of design, the bags are aesthetically similar to most similar bags (minus the solar panels, of course). The company does include an indicator built into its raised logo on each bag that lights up when the battery is charging. While the feature is expected, the way in which its delivered is stylish to say the least.



The company's new, larger "Generator" bag comes in at 17 watts with enough power to fuel a small stereo system directly or to fully charge your Macbook Pro after most of the day's worth of direct sunlight. Of course, you could also charge the integrated battery included in all of Voltaic's bags using a nearby outlet to give yourself an extra boost of power on a less-than-sunny day.

While Voltaic's solar solutions are intriguing and, from the looks of them, quite durable, portable solar systems on the whole still have a ways to go before they're practical enough to keep you away from the outlets at a nearby Starbucks. Recent developments in the field have paved the way for a new breed of solar technologies that are more flexible and far cheaper than what is available today. Still, for the green-minded geek on the go, Voltaic's bags may be worth their hefty price tags that range anywhere from \$199 (for iPods) to \$599 (for laptops).