

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3520/solio-magesium-edition-rechargeable-power>

## Solio Magnesium Edition rechargeable solar power pack

Can the sun breathe life into your iPod?

by Chris Hall published on 8 October 2008

We first looked at the Solio Magnesium with the slight suspicion, because on paper, it appears to be too good to be true. When we looked at the Solio Classic, we found this to be the case - it promised a lot, but didn't deliver it in the timescale we expected. The emphasis, it seems, is too much on the eco credentials, rather than the portable power supply. So we took the Solio Magnesium on with a renewed interest having looked at number of portable power packs here at Pocket-lint in the last few years.

The basic premise of the Solio Magnesium is to provide a portable power supply in the form of a battery, which can be charged either through the mains, or by deploying the attached solar panels to capture energy from the sun. The top half of the device is the battery whilst the swivel panels neatly sit beneath. Someone has obviously put some time into the design and it pays off: it's a slick looking device.

There is a single LED-lit button on the top which serves two purposes, the first is to show you the charge status of the unit through a series of flashes, the second is to start charging. Basically each flash of the light indicates 20% of charge status, so one flash is 20%, five flashes is 100%. When the Solio is charging another device, this LED flashes intermittently so you know something is happening: you'll also get the normal response from your device being charged, a battery indicator on the screen or whatever.

To fill the Solio Magnesium with charge in the first place you have two options: mains or sun. If you are serious about it, then charging from the mains adapter is the best place to start. This takes about 6 hours and works through a 5.5V DC power pack that is supplied in the box and it is something of a



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shame that it can't be charged via a more conventional adapter, like Mini-USB, for example. The power out, however, does use a Mini-USB connector, and yes, we did spend a few hours trying to charge through the wrong hole...

The alternative of course is to sweep out the solar panels, like a three bladed fan and leave it to soak up the sun. Considering that it takes 6 hours to fully charge from the mains, it's no surprise to hear that it takes 10-12 hours in good sun (say Solio) and a rather dubious 12-48 hours in patchy sun or behind glass. The latter experience is one that UK users can expect for most of the year, with perhaps that odd day in June when you get some decent sun.

What this really means is that you need to charge from the mains and then take every opportunity to top-up the Solio, so you might leave it languishing on a window ledge and there is no harm in that. But if you are thinking of taking a year to travel the world and want a source of power for your iPod, then this may well be the answer when you get into more remote territory.

So fully charged, you are out on the road and need to top-up the battery in your mobile phone. No problem. In the box you get a selection of iGo tips, which basically cover Motorola, Samsung, BlackBerry, LG and Nokia. It looks like a glaring omission that there is no Micro-USB which is quickly becoming the norm for smaller devices. We presume that this will change as the content is revised, but it is something to watch for now.

You also get the most useful cable, which simply allows you to use a standard USB charging cable, which it suggests is perfect for MP3 players, for example, the iPod. The great thing about all these connectors is that you can ditch many of your cables and just take a few tips.

So when it comes to charging, we used the Solio Magnesium from a full charge across a number of days to charge a number of devices - a

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## At a glance

### What is it?

Power pack with solar charging

### Good

Range of charging tips available, compact design

### Bad

Expensive, no indication of whether solar charging is working, no Micro-USB

### Verdict

Considering the Solio Magnesium as a battery with a sun top-up makes this an appealing, if expensive, option for power on the go

**Price** £99.99

**Our score**

**8/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**

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BlackBerry, iPod nano, Motorola phone. From a single charge of the Solio we managed to charge these devices without having to top-up elsewhere. The process is slower than on the mains or through your normal USB charger, but it does work. The battery is a Li-ion 3.7V 1.8A cell, with a cited nominal DC output of 3V 3A, which is why it takes longer to charge your device than a regular charger.

The thing that you need to bear in mind here is that this isn't a fast solution - the Solio takes it's time to charge itself as well as other devices. It also weighs in at 179g, so fairly light, but a bit too bulky for a pocket.

## **VERDICT**

If there is a criticism of the Solio Magnesium, it is that it doesn't give you any indication that it is charging from the sun - you have no concept of whether this process is working or not, until you come back 6 or 12 hours later and press the button, which might be too long for some. We'd like to see something in the future, some sort of passive indicator so you knew that something was happening.

We have seen the benefit of a charging device in normal travel (from the Philips Power2Go range), even around places where there is a plentiful supply of power points; the Solio offers this advantage with the bonus of being able to top-up your power source from the sun.

Considering the Solio Magnesium as a battery with a sun top-up makes this an appealing, if expensive, option for power on the go.