

# Fun Facts About Solar Power

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Here is a collection of fascinating fun facts about solar power. People have used the sun as a heat source for thousands of years. It is only with the advancements in technology that have taken place in recent years that have enabled us to fully harness this power.

- Families in ancient Greece built their homes to get the most sunlight during the cold winter months. The ancient Greeks believed that the sun was the god Helios and he drove his chariot around the earth towards the sky in the morning and in the evening back again.
- The discovery of the photovoltaic effect is credited to the French physicist Alexandre-Edmond Becquerel in 1839.
- In 1921 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Albert Einstein for experiments with solar power and photovoltaics.
- Way back in 1955 The American Solar Energy Society held its first meeting in Phoenix and attracted the first Russian scientist to the US following the second World War. There is film footage showing early photovoltaics which was developed for NASA, solar cookers and solar heating panels.
- The first solar flight took place in 1974 in California by an unmanned plane which was developed by two brothers Roland and Bob Boucher.
- In 1975 the first solar boat was constructed in England and in 1996 Kenichi Horie from Japan made the first solar powered crossing of the Pacific Ocean in a catamaran.
- The first World Solar Challenge took place in 1987. This is a solar-powered car race covering 3021 km through the Australian outback from Darwin to Adelaide.

Did you know that it is possible to boost any solar panel output by 75% simply by placing a mirror that is about twice the size of the panel on the ground in front of the panel?

- **PV cells do not need direct sunlight to work - you can still generate some electricity on a cloudy day.**

Solar electricity is a green, renewable energy and does not release any harmful carbon dioxide or other pollutants. A typical home PV system could save around 1200kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year which is around 30 tonnes over a lifetime.

- You can store the electricity that your solar power system generates in batteries for a cloudy day.
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**You can sell any extra electricity that you produce using your solar power back to the grid and make a bit of money.**

It takes only about 8 minutes for solar energy to travel from the sun to the earth.

- About 30% of the radiation that we receive from the sun at the upper atmosphere is reflected back into space. The rest is absorbed by the clouds, oceans and land masses here on Earth. Yet even in these conditions, the energy that our planet gets from one just hour of sun exposure is equal to the amount of power that humans use in an entire year.

Large scale solar projects that are being developed world wide show that sun powered clean energy technology are both achievable and profitable. Solar power plants produce Megawatts (MW) with one MW being sufficient power to supply 1000 homes. One of the largest solar power projects that the world has ever seen is the "Desertec" plan to use the uninhabitable North African desert for a power grid of concentrated thermal power stations which could supply Europe with all of its power needs by the year 2050.

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