

Two travel gadgets that hit the spot

[Cool Tools](#) By [Keith Shaw](#), Network World, 09/17/2008



Recent travels have given me the chance to try out some of the latest gadgets, and these two help make the issue of recharging my other gadgets a bit easier when I'm on the road.

The scoop: Mini Battery Pack and Charger for iPhone and iPod, by [Kensington](#), about \$50.

What it is: A snap-on lithium-ion rechargeable battery pack for iPhone and iPod models that use the Universal connector, the Mini Battery Pack offers extra battery time for those devices. The company claims the pack can extend the device up to 30 hours for music, six hours for video, or up to three extra hours of talk time. When attached to an iPhone or iPod at the bottom of the device, the Kensington battery recharges the music player or phone. A USB port on the battery lets you recharge the battery and the iPod/iPhone simultaneously when connected to a PC via an included retractable USB charging cable. An LED meter on the battery pack tells you how much power is left on the device.

Why it's cool: As many iPhone 3G owners can attest, the battery life on them are short-lived if they are trying to connect to the 3G network all day. Heavy usage on the phone and data networks can drain the battery quickly, so it's nice to have a handy battery pack that's extremely portable as well. The small size makes it quite easy to throw into a laptop bag or even your pocket, and it beats having to power up a laptop or carry around a bulkier power cord for recharging the iPhone or iPod on-the-fly.

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Some caveats: I wouldn't recommend this as your only power source for recharging an iPhone or iPod on long trips, but this works well as an emergency power source until you can find a power outlet for long-term recharging.

Grade: 5 stars.

The scoop: Mini Surge Protector with USB Charger, by Belkin, about \$25.

What it is: This device provides mobile travelers with three extra power outlets and two USB charging ports in a portable form factor. The "brick" includes a rotatable plug that can be adjusted horizontally or vertically fit into regular power outlets conveniently to provide extra outlets quickly.

Why it's cool: When I'm on the road, one of the first things I end up doing upon entering my hotel room is going on a search mission to find all of the extra power outlets so I can recharge my phone, iPod, laptop and other gadgets. Often, the outlets are hidden behind the TV, or in very inaccessible locations. Instead of bringing along a bulkier surge protector power strip, the Belkin device fits nicely in a travel bag, and lets me recharge all of my devices in one location. I really like the addition of the two USB charging slots on the brick, as I then don't have to utilize the USB ports on my notebook for recharging purposes.

In addition, when you're at the airport and power outlets are limited, you can become the hit of the road warrior set by providing others with additional outlets quickly and easily.

Some caveats: If you have power adapters that are the bulkier, brick-like plugs, they may block additional outlets on the power strip, so you may still have to do the power outlet treasure hunt in the hotel room.

Grade: 4 stars.