



# Warren Buffett Solar Power

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### The Unlikely Solar Champion

When you think Warren Buffett, solar panels aren't exactly the first image that springs to mind. The Oracle of Omaha built his fortune on insurance, railroads, and Coca-Cola - not exactly bleeding-edge tech. Yet here we are in 2024, with Berkshire Hathaway Energy operating as America's third-largest solar operator. What changed?

Well, it's not about tree-hugging idealism. Buffett famously quipped: "We don't do altruism." The numbers tell the story: Solar now delivers 19% returns for Berkshire's utilities versus 10% for traditional assets. Last quarter alone, their solar farms generated enough juice to power 1.2 million homes.

### Buffett's Energy Playbook

Buffett's solar strategy follows three rules even a novice investor could grasp:

- Buy distressed assets (remember the 2013 NV Energy acquisition?)
- Scale through regulated utilities
- Pair panels with storage - their new 800MW battery project in California speaks volumes

Wait, no - scratch that. There's actually a fourth rule Berkshire's been quietly testing: using solar farms as tax shelters. With the IRA's production credits, every megawatt installed saves \$24,000 annually. Multiply that by their 2.4GW portfolio, and you've got serious money staying put.

### Nevada: Solar's Testing Ground

The real action's happening in sun-scorched Nevada. Berkshire's 690MW Gemini project near Las Vegas isn't just big - it's revolutionary. By combining single-axis tracking with AI-powered cleaning robots, they've pushed panel efficiency to 23.7%. That's 4% higher than industry averages.

But here's the kicker: They're leasing federal land at \$7/acre/year. You know what that means? Solar's now cheaper than natural gas in the Southwest. NV Energy (a Berkshire subsidiary) just signed a 25-year PPA at 2.1¢/kWh - 60% below 2020 rates.

## The Storage Imperative

Buffett's team cracked the solar puzzle by solving its Achilles' heel: intermittent supply. Their 2023 pilot in Texas paired 200MW solar with 100MW/400MWh batteries. Result? 92% capacity factor - comparable to nuclear plants.

"We're not building solar farms," admits Berkshire Energy CEO Chris Brown. "We're building dispatchable power stations." This shift explains why their solar assets now command 14x EBITDA multiples versus 8x for conventional utilities.

## Global Ripple Effect

China's watching closely. After Berkshire's Australian solar-storage hybrid went live in November, JinkoSolar shares jumped 17% in a week. India? They've replicated Buffett's tax equity model for their 500GW renewable push by 2030.

But let's be real - not everyone's cheering. Traditional utility execs grumble about "subsidized competition." Coal communities feel abandoned. Even environmentalists question the ecological cost of panel disposal. It's messy, complicated, and utterly fascinating.

## Q&A

Q: How much has Buffett invested in solar?

A: Over \$30 billion since 2013, with \$8.2B committed in 2024 alone.

Q: Which companies benefit most?

A: First Solar (panel supplier) and BYD (storage partner) see 35% of Berkshire's solar spend.

Q: Could this model work in Europe?

A: Germany's testing similar strategies, but land constraints and NIMBYism pose challenges.

Q: What's the biggest risk?

A: Grid integration costs. Every \$1 spent on solar requires \$0.40 in transmission upgrades.

Q: Will retail investors get exposure?

A: Indirectly through Berkshire stock (BRK.B), which now derives 18% of earnings from renewables.

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