

Scrubba: The Compact and Cost-Free Clothes Washer

A lightweight and ultra-compact washing machine has been developed that will change the way people travel, and decrease their load, too

By Reid Lewis

W For many adventurers, whether their passion is hiking, camping, backpacking or simply travelling, the less weight that's being carried, stowed or lugged, the better. And, the reasons for this are obvious – less weight translates into greater maneuverability and freedom.



Laundry at work in the Scrubba - Image Gear Editor

One simple way to ensure that one's load or pack weight is reduced is to pack and carry as few items of clothing as possible. However, there are a couple stumbling blocks that prevent a reduction in weight that's dramatic enough to have the desired effect. For the camper or hiker, in the woods or on the open trail, laundry services are nonexistent, resulting in the need to bring multiples of every item of clothing to ensure somewhat clean and dry clothes each day. And, for the backpacker or traveller, while laundry facilities might be readily accessible to them, the cost of doing a load of laundry every few days can become financially prohibitive.

For these reasons, Ashley Newland, avid traveller and native of Australia, has developed one of the most inventive and innovative tools that should be on everybody's list of essential items to bring on their next trip. And it's one that will allow adventurers to reduce the weight of their load and to bring as few clothes as they choose for their next trip.

The Smallest Washing Machine in the World?

Newlands' invention is the Scrubba Wash Bag – described on the product's website as "the world's smallest washing machine" allowing the user to clean their clothes anywhere and anytime, for free.

The Scrubba is extremely lightweight, weighing in at 150 grams and is ultra-compact, folding to almost pocket size when not in use. And, what's more, the Scrubba does not require electricity or any other source of power to operate.

"I had the thought that washboards have been around for centuries and obviously work, and that we could incorporate one into a flexible sealable bag. That's what kicked it off."

~ Ashley Newlands, president and founder, Scrubba

The design and concept is simple, and the product is extraordinarily easy to use. Constructed using a durable and lightweight polyurethane coated nylon housing, the bag has an opening at one end, wide enough to insert clothing. To wash clothes, the user simply adds water, cleaning liquid and clothes into the bag until it's at about 20-40 per cent capacity, rolls down and clips handy seals located at the side of the bag to ensure that what's in the bag stays in the bag, and then opens and squeezes a valve to expel air from the bag. Then, it's as simple as pressing clothes down and rubbing them on the bag's internal ultra-flexible urethane washboard for 30 seconds. A transparent window, conveniently located in



**BUMP ON-SALE
ACCESSORIES &
APPAREL UP TO**

50% OFF*

*DISCOUNT
APPLIES TO
RETAIL PRICE.

USE COUPON CODE

809-1-6WZJL

INCREASE YOUR SAVINGS >



Your next washing machine can fit in your backpack - *Photo courtesy of Scrubba*

the centre of the bag, also allows the user to see what's being washed, and the effects of their efforts.

Newlands, a patent attorney who's travelled to more than 40 countries, developed the idea while grappling with the challenge of attempting to decrease his weight load while backpacking. In the lead up to a trip that he was taking to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania with a friend, he began experimenting with giant ziplock bags to wash his clothes in.

"That's when in my head the patent attorney kicked in and I started thinking about ways I could improve on this concept," he explains. "About a week later I had the thought that washboards have been around for centuries and obviously work, and that we could incorporate one into a flexible sealable bag. That's what kicked it off."

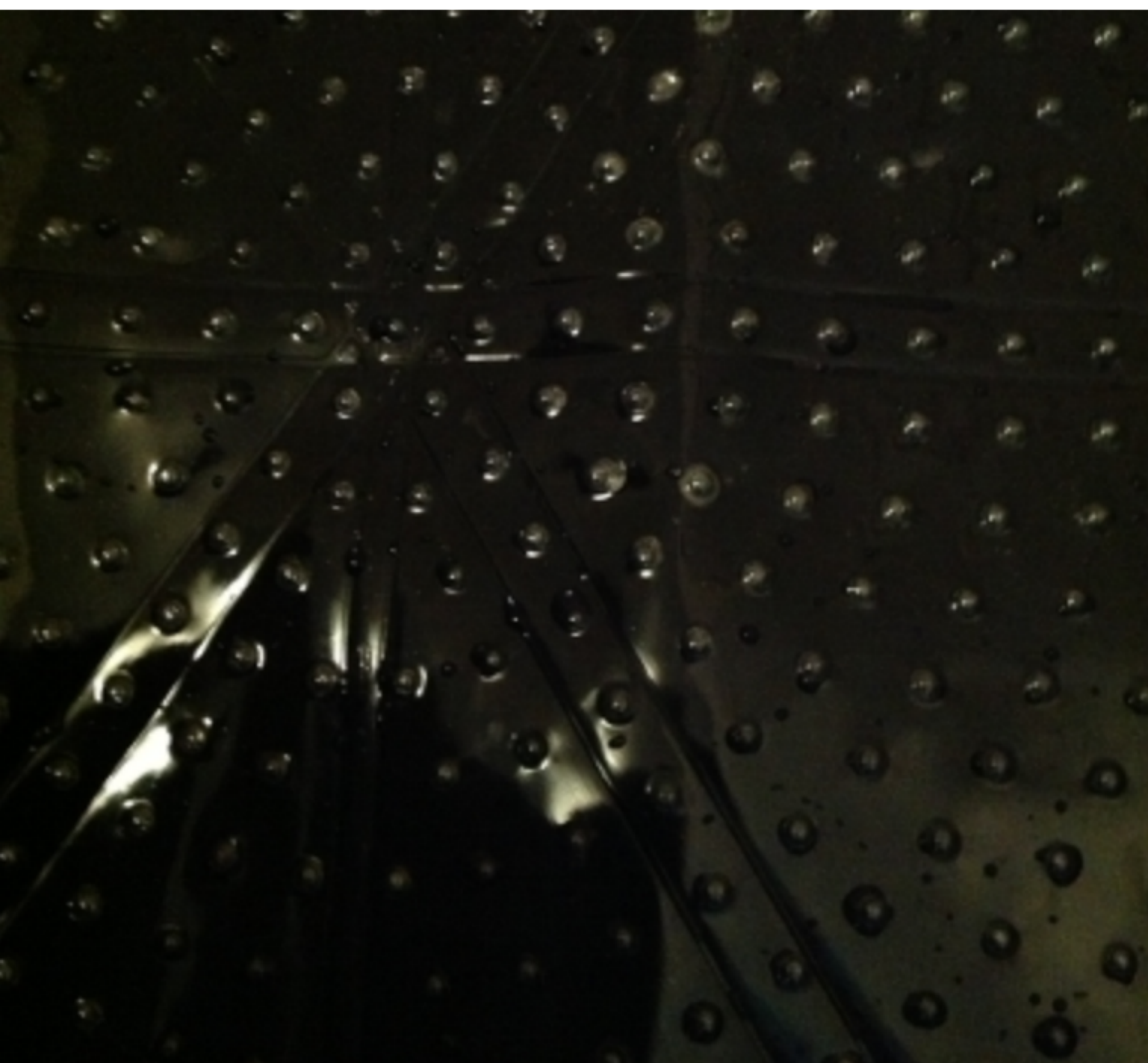
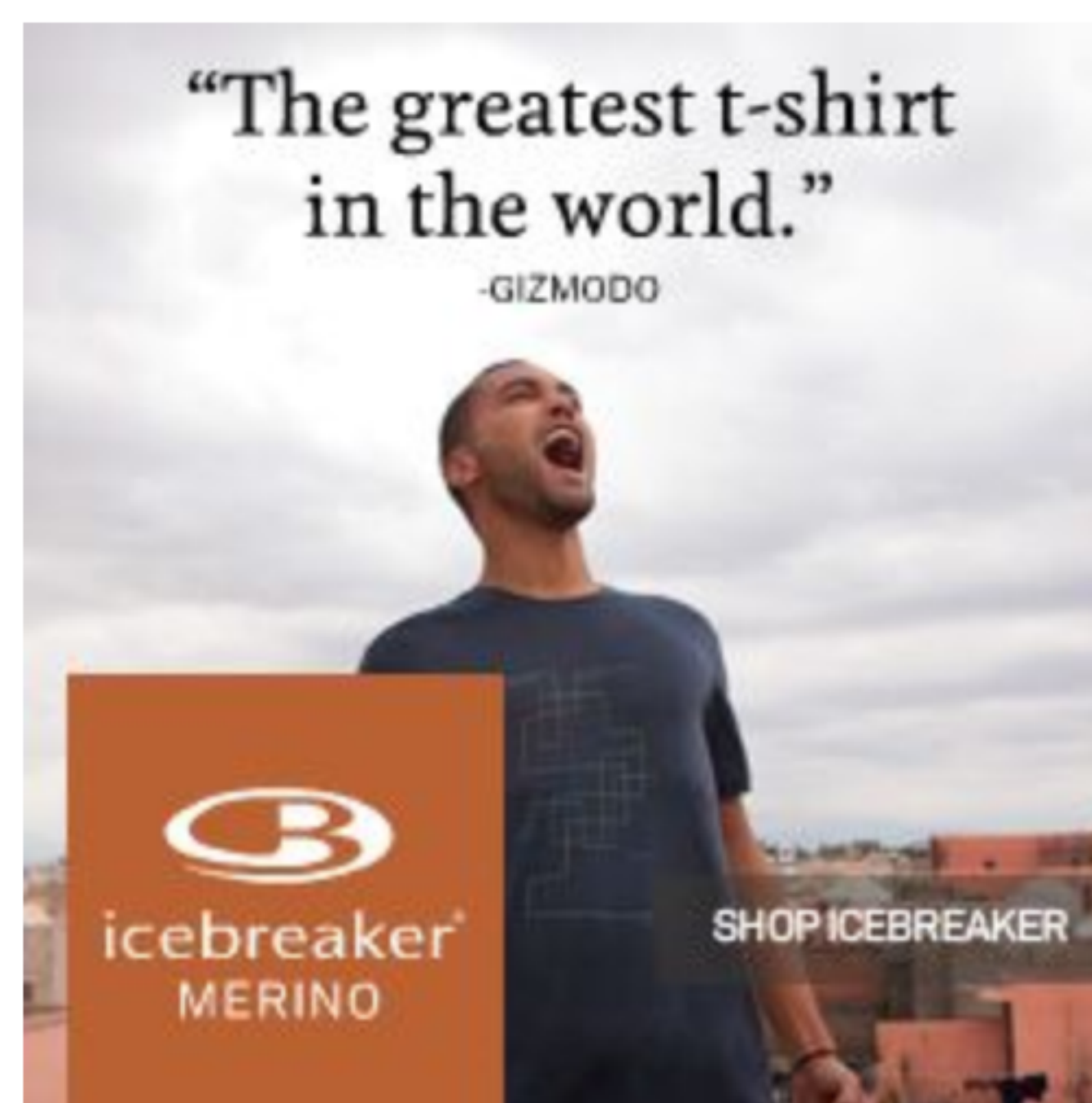
Dry-Bag to Wash-Bag

It took quite a few months before he realized that simple modifications could be made to the everyday dry-bag to develop the wash bag he had in mind. He went ahead and made a rough prototype that would six weeks – just enough time for their stay in Africa. The trip, and use of the prototype, went off without a hitch

"That's when I really started the process of refining and developing the Scrubba."

Gear Editors test team took the Scrubba into the woods, and weren't afraid to get dirty while putting this product through the wringer. And the results, they reported, were nothing short of amazing.

"I had real doubts that I was going to put my dirty, mud-stained clothes in this little bag, with its flexible little urethane washboard, and pull out clean clothes in little more than 30 seconds," admits the *Gear Editor* test team lead for the Scrubba. "But, wouldn't you know it – when I pulled the clothes out to hang them up to dry, they were clean. I couldn't believe that this little, lightweight product, requiring no electrical power source was so effective."



Nubs inside the Scrubba create a "washboard" effect - Photo by Gear Editor staff



The team also liked the transparent window, an improvement on the first design, which makes it easy to see the clothes in the bag and whether or not any suds are actually being applied to the clothes.

“Purging air from the bag, which is necessary to wash the clothes properly, is also very easy. I would, however, recommend leaving a little bit of air in the bag to allow the soap to foam... but not too much air or washing the clothes becomes a little difficult.”

The team also highly recommends using Camp Suds or a similar biodegradable soap, and to avoid using dish soap or laundry detergent in consideration to both the potential environmental impact and residue build-up. And, Newlands advises not to use bleach or any other harsh chemicals, as these will start to eat through the bag if spilled on the exterior.

“The best use for this product is likely for shorts, t-shirts, socks, underwear and other base layers... for backcountry, these are the most vital items that you need cleaned, anyway.”

~ Gear Editor test team

The only downside that the team found was that, because the bag itself is small, the capacity inside the bag is also

small.

“One pair of jeans is definitely the max load,” says one member of the test team. “The best use for this product is likely for shorts, t-shirts, socks, underwear and other base layers. But, for backcountry, these are the most vital items that you need cleaned, anyway.”

Tips for longer use

Newlands says that the bag should last for at least 75-100 uses, depending of course on the user's treatment of the bag. He advises against the use of water that's too hot, because at about 40 or 50 degrees, the bag may start to weaken. He also suggests one vital care instruction to ensure that the bag lasts as long as possible – and that is to invert the bag after use to allow it to dry and prevent mould.

Earlier this year, the Scrubba was awarded top innovation for 2012 in *Anthill magazine's* 'Smart 100' innovations, have just recently received favourable publicity in the media and have also received no fewer than 40-50 wholesale pricing requests from retailers in about 25 different countries.

“In the short-term,” says Newlands, “we'll be selling online, offering shipping anywhere in the world. But, we'd like some really good retailers or distributors in as many countries as we can.”

The Scrubba Washbag is available on the company's website for \$59.95. For more information about the Scrubba Wash Bag, visit www.thescrubba.com.



Everything you need for laundry day anywhere - Photo by Gear Editor staff