THE EVERY MIGRANT'S GUIDE

TO

ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSINGS

all the things you can source from the streets, with instructions on how to use them to make that crossing

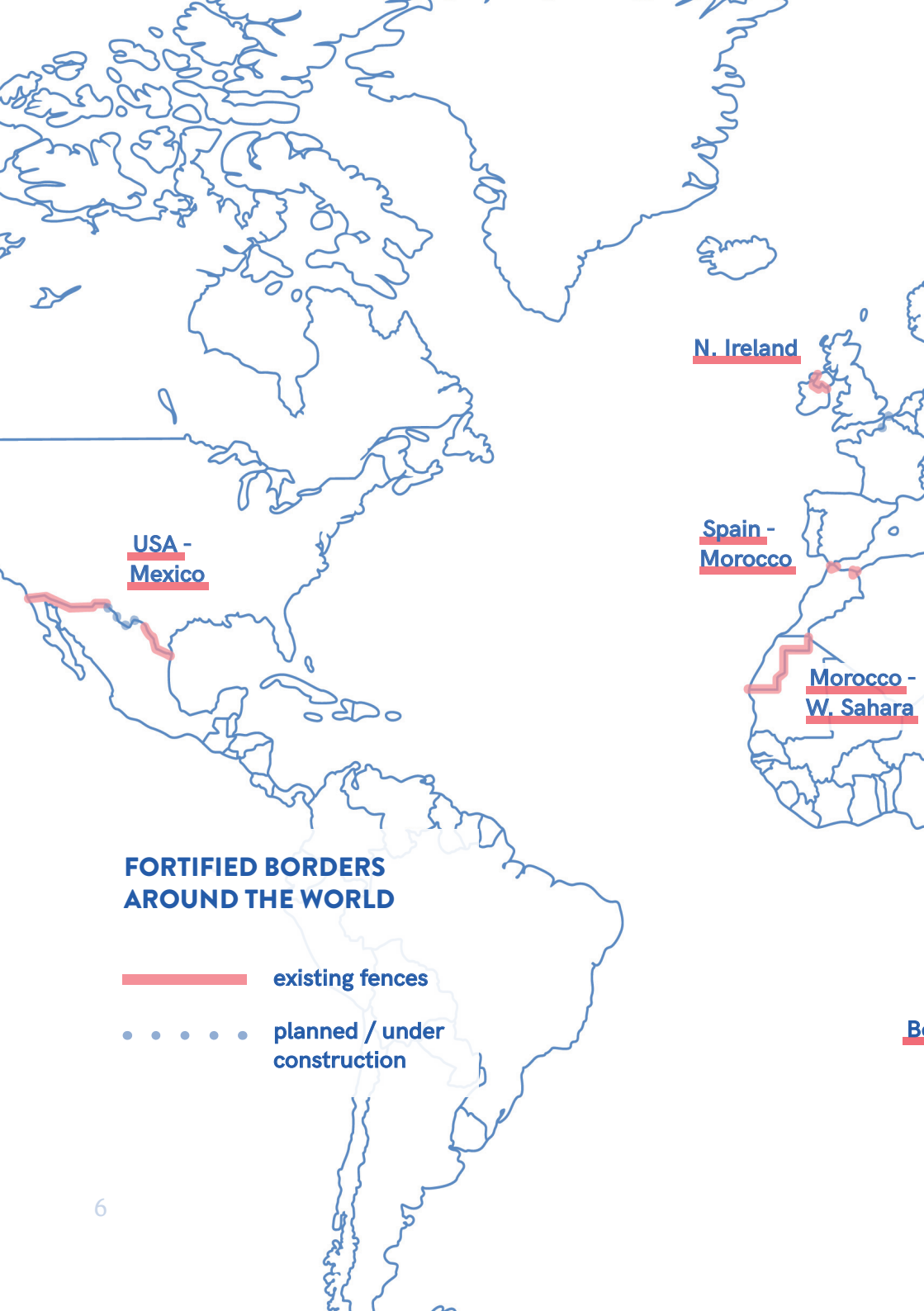
"We need to be really bothered
once in a while. How long is it
since you were really bothered?
About something important,
about something real?"

Ray Bradbury

This is a pocket guide for illegals attempting to pass through frontiers they wouldn't otherwise be allowed to cross. In times of border fences, travel bans, mandatory detention, deportation plans and an increasingly blurry line between refugee and criminal, the project takes a candid look at the phenomenon, from the migrant's point of view.
The booklet collects in fact a selection of items used by illegals all over the world, holding together real tools - currently used by migrants - and fantastic ones - which still might soon be spotted around some border checkpoint -. All of them come with real, detailed instructions for assembly and use.

The project takes inspiration from a pre-existing tradition of "warfare guides" for civilians, from WW II *Airplane Spotter Cards*, used to distinguish Allied aircrafts from enemy ones, to the *How to protest Intelligently* pamphlet circulating in Egypt during the Arab Spring.

With the ironic yet very practical tone of a *Do-it-yourself* manual, the project aims to show what being an illegal migrant really implies, letting everyday objects tell the story. Without judging the reasons that brought its readers to the status of illegals - being it economic hardship, political instability or environmental disasters -, the manual collects testimonies of the most spontaneous form of design. A nomadic, cheap, desperate yet super-functional one.


N. Ireland
USA -
Mexico
Spain -
Morocco
Morocco -
W. Sahara
FORTIFIED BORDERS
AROUND THE WORLD
existing fences
planned / under
construction


Estonia - Russia
Hungary - Serbia
Macedonia - Greece
Turkey - Syria
Gaza
Lebanon - Israel
Kuwait - Iraq
India - Pakistan
India - Bangladesh
Zambia
Zimbabwe
otswana
Mozambique

CONTENTS

Here's a collection of tools, gathered by typology of barrier whose crossing they can facilitate.

MAN-MADE

Where entrance undergoes strict scrutiny.
Thorough passport and lugagge checks, violent entrance denial and convincion as precautionary measure are to be expected.

FENCES

NATURAL

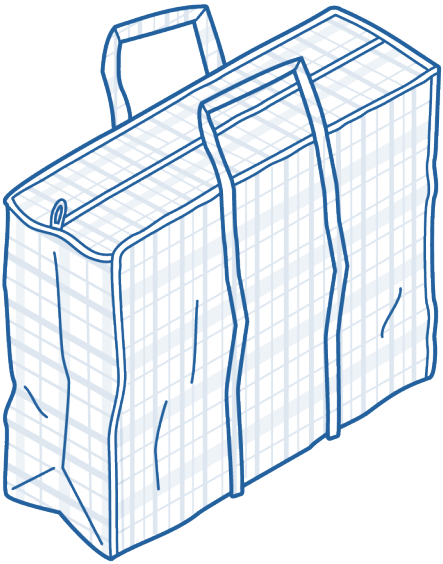
Where the issue is not just politics, but geographical distance or the nature of the physical obstacle between you and the place you are trying to reach.

DESERTS

WATERS

FENCES

WHAT YOU NEED

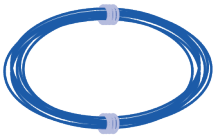


plastic storage bag

scissors

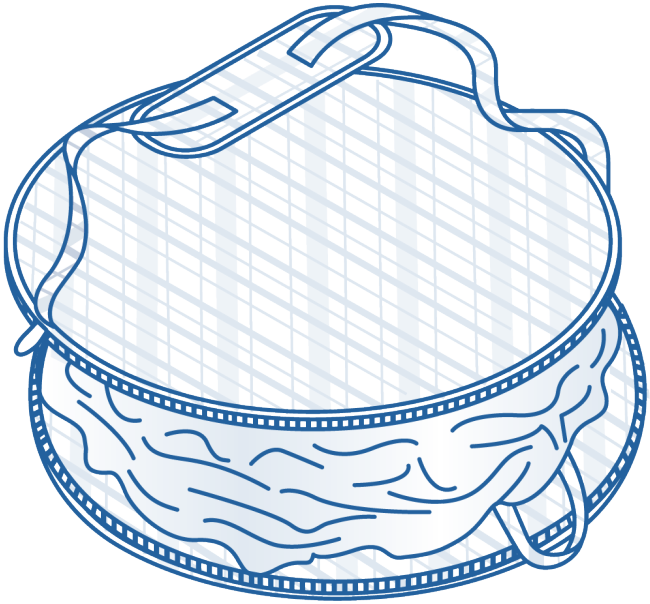
superglue

space blanket

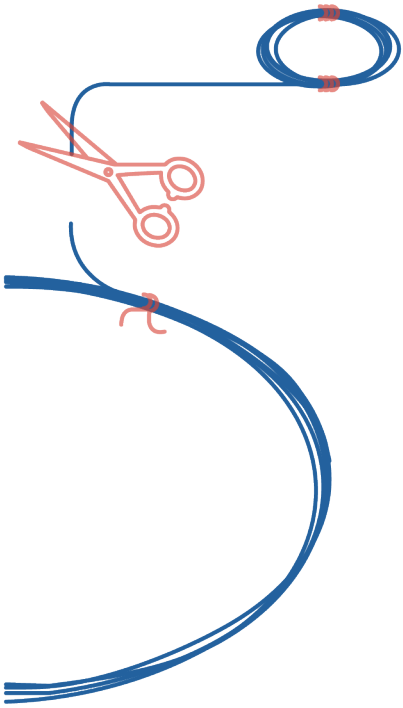


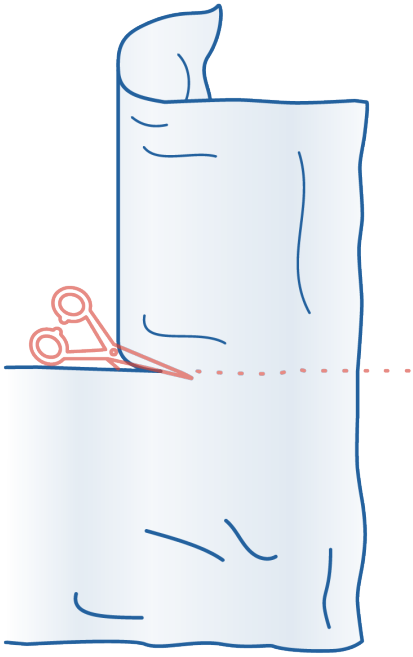
metal thread

THERMAL INVISIBILITY CLOAK



This is for those attempting to cross the French border and reach the UK. Perfected from Talibans' *anti-drone tent*, this collapsible *invisibility cloak* will in fact render you invisible to most thermal cameras adopted by authorities to control the inside of commercial trucks moving past the frontier.



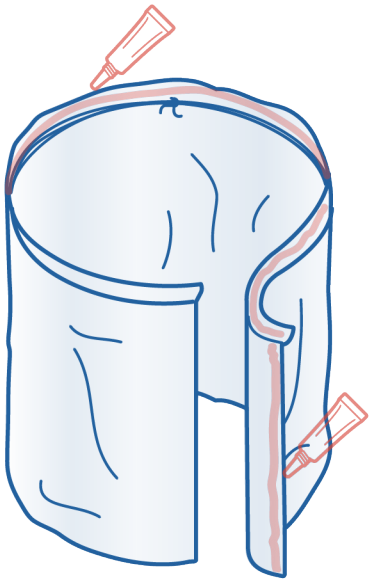


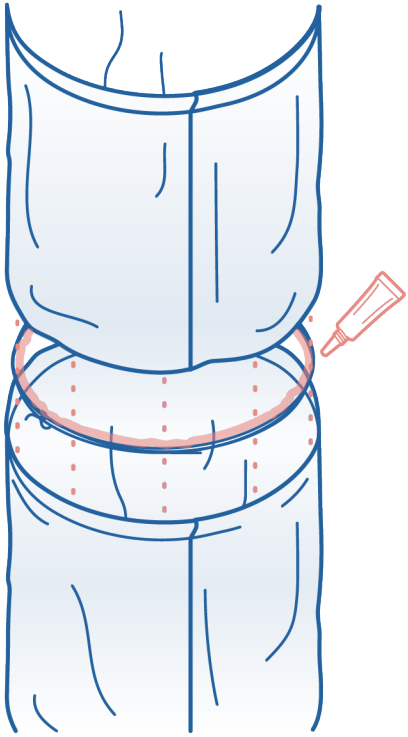
STEP 1

Cut and bend a bundle of thick metal thread into three hoops of equal diameter, each large enough to comfortably contain your body shape.

STEP 2

Now take the space blanket(s): you'll need two strips,each 2 m long and tall about half your actual stature. So, let's say you're 1,8 m tall: you'll need to join 2 blankets together, obtaining 2 pieces of 2x1,4 m each.



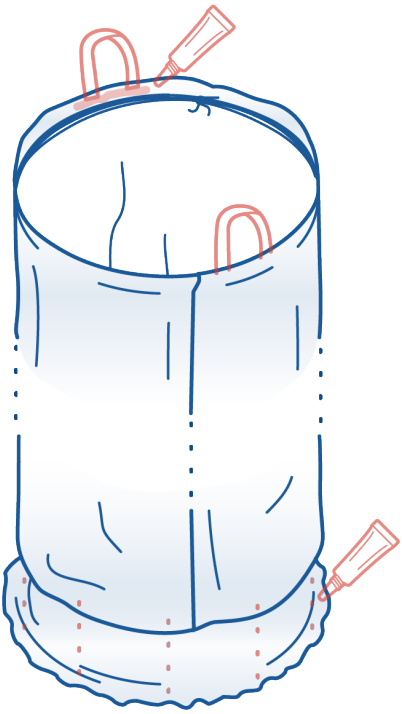


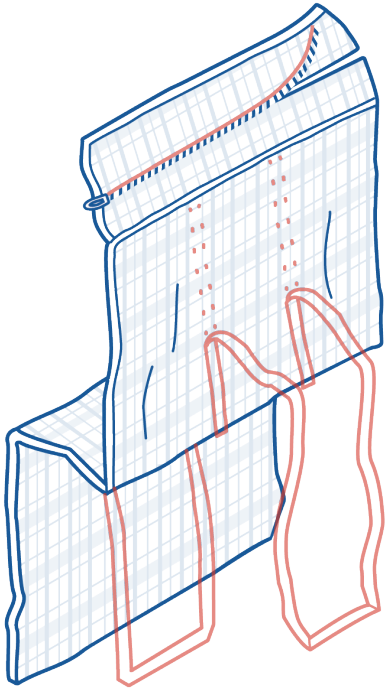
STEP 3

Glue (only) the top of each strip of blanket all around the circumference of a metal hoop. Then glue together the edges on the side, obtaining a tubular shape.

STEP 4

Take the two tubes you just assembled and join them together, gluing their bottoms to the third hoop you've made before. You'll get a collapsible tube, reinforced with a metal frame.



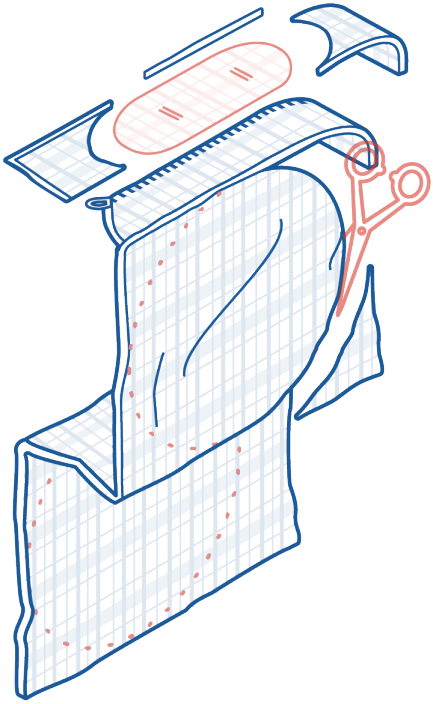


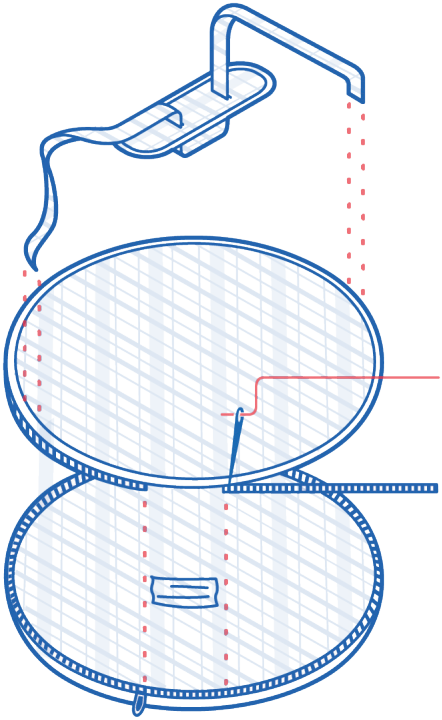
STEP 5

When the glue has dried, add a circular piece of blanket to the bottom and two strips of fabric to the top - they will work as handles, to raise or lower your "invisibility cloak".

STEP 6

Now take the storage bag: you'll use it to assemble a bag large enough to contain your cloak. Cut down the side seams to unfold the bag completely, then detatch zip and handles.





STEP 7

Cut out of the main piece of fabric 2 wide circles - slightly larger than the tubular "cloak" you created - and a long strip - it will be the shoulder strap -. Also, keep a rectangular offcut to use as shoulder pad.

STEP 8

Sew together the two circular cutouts for a small portion of their circumference and add a zip all around the rest of it. Then stitch the shoulder strap to the side. Now you can collapse and fit your "cloak" in it.

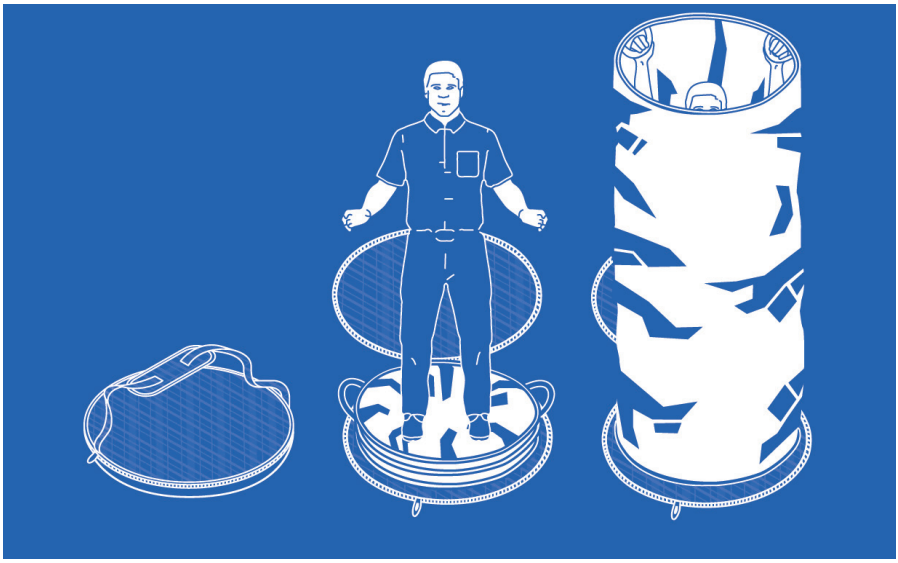
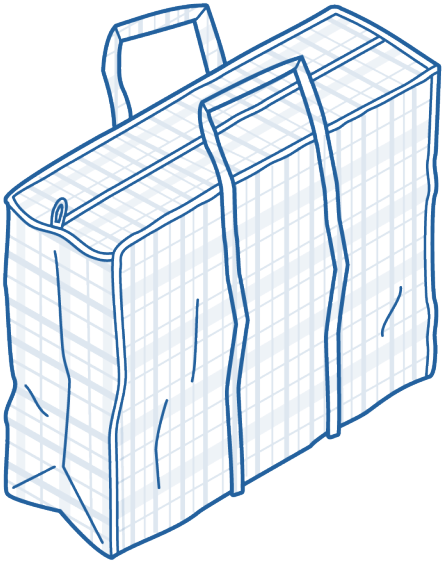


fig 1. - Illustration from an online pamphlet shows how use the device to hide from infrared cameras.

fig 2. - A group of migrants hiding inside a truck, as detected by thermal imaging cameras at a checkpoint in Calais, French border.

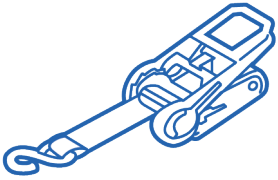
WHAT YOU NEED



plastic storage bag

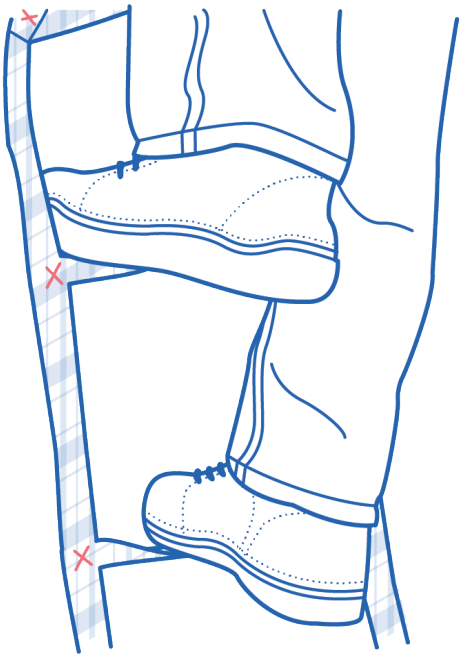
thread

scissors

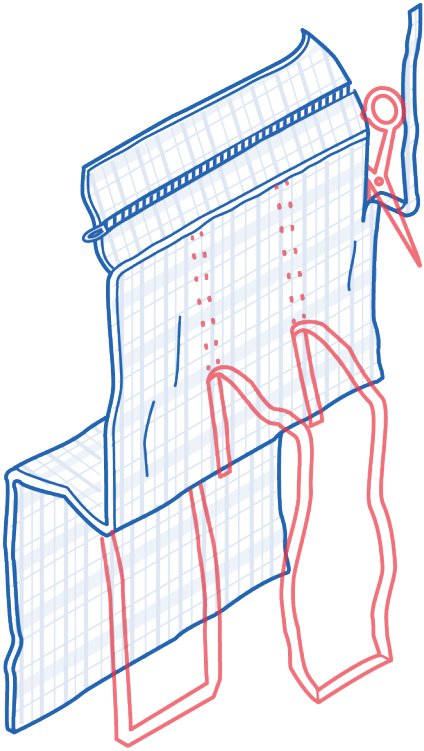


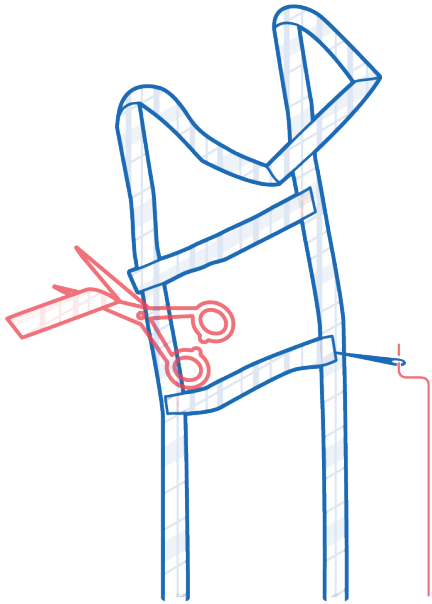
heavy duty ratchet strap

PLASTIC LADDER BAG



This is for those attempting to climb - a migrant detention centre wall, a border fence, the back of a truck, whatever -. Combining rock climbing training with the properties of woven PP fabric - the very cheap yet resistent one used for bulk storage bags -, here you get a soft ladder, for no more than a couple € / £ / $.



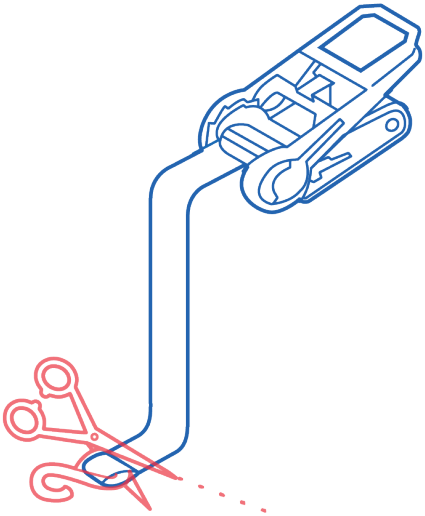


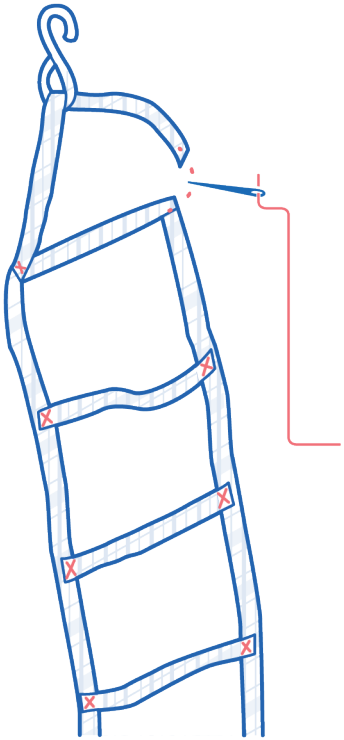
STEP 1

Cut down the side seams of the storage bag; then unsew the handles - they'll be the rails of your ladder -. Also, cut out from the large flat cloth you've obtained a couple of small strips.

STEP 2

Cut the strips into smaller bits - this will define the distance between the rails of your ladder-. Now sew each strip across the two rails, at a regular distance - about 30/40 cm-: these are your ladder steps.





STEP 3

Now take the ratchet: at the bottom of the fabric strip you should have a metal hook. Cut the fabric to release it: by attaching it to your ladder, it'll be easier to hook it and climb up all sorts of vertical surfaces -.

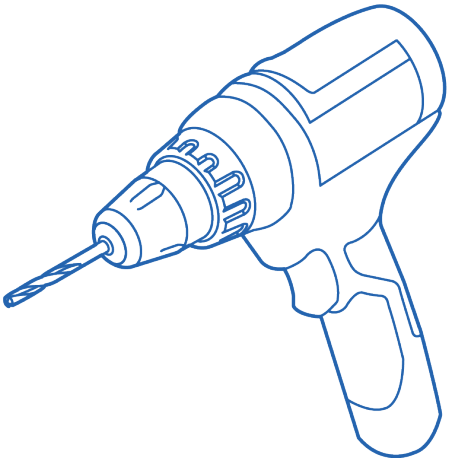
STEP 4

Go back to the soft ladder: take an offcut, slightly longer than the ladder steps you've previously assembled, pass the hook through it and sew it to the top of both rails.
Here you have a soft ladder.

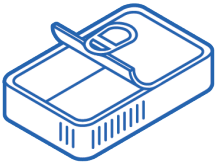
fig 1. - An illegal migrant attempts to climb a metal fence.

fig. 2 - A group of migrants in Calais attempts to climb on the back of a commercial truck, while queuing to board a ferry headed for the UK.

WHAT YOU NEED



electric drill



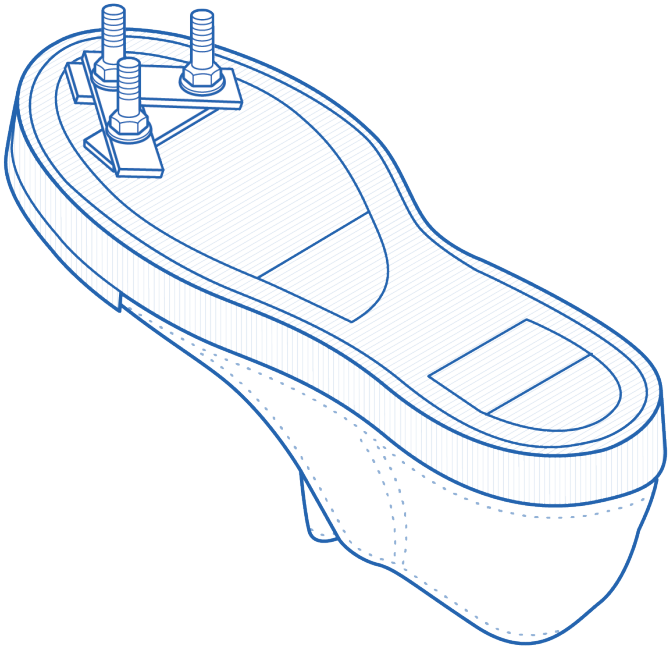
tin can

heavy duty scissors

washers, bolts, nuts

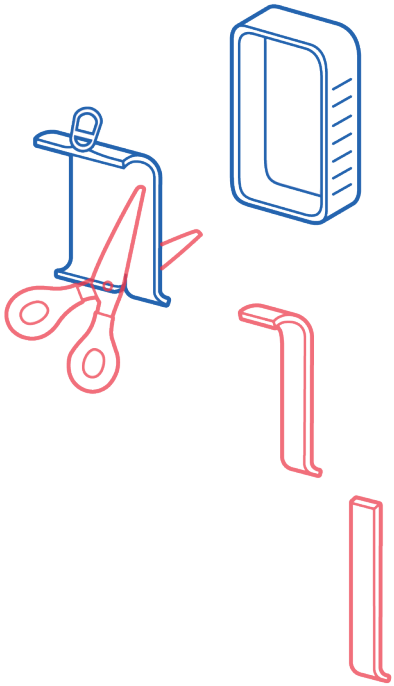
running shoes

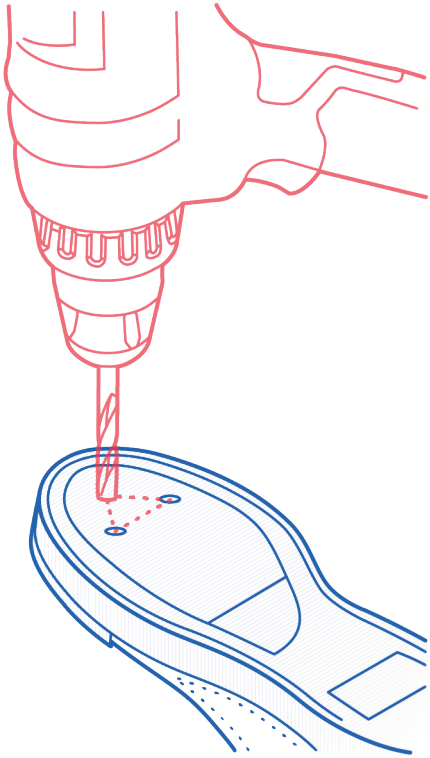
FENCE HOPPING SHOES



Designed by migrants at the Moroccan border, trying to cross 3m tall fences dividing them from the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, it's a simple trick that will give your shoes a stronger grip on a metal mesh. You might have to throw away your trainers after, but in exchange for access to the Schengen area.

HOW TO BUILD IT



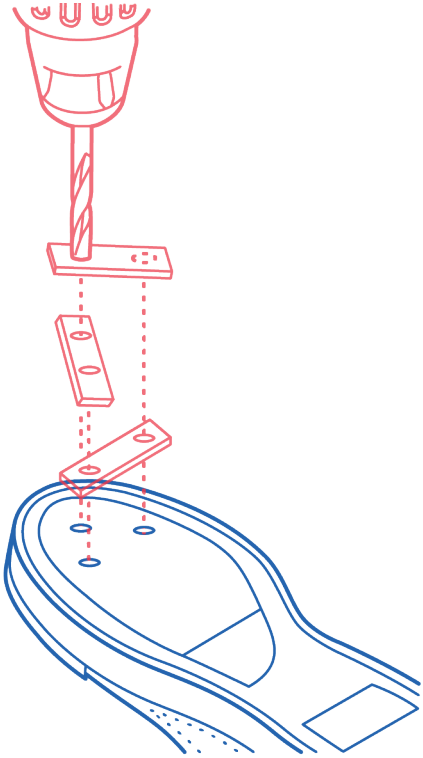


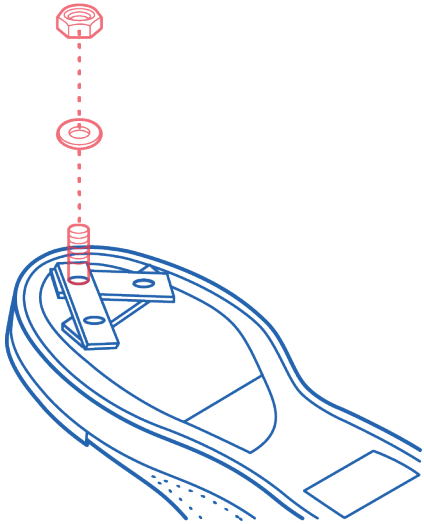
STEP 1

Take an empty sardine tin box and detatch the metal lid. With some heavy duty scissors, cut out of the sheet three metal strips, each of about 3 cm width.

STEP 2

Now take your shoes - I suggest trainers with no lug sole, as they'll breake easier to drill into -. With an electric drill, drill three holes in the top of the sole, as if they were the 3 vertices of a triangle.





STEP 3

Take the three metal strips and drill two holes in each of them, with the same distance you defined between the holes you just drilled into the sole.

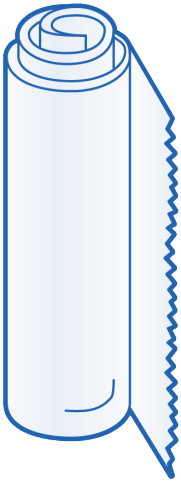
STEP 4

Insert the bolts inside the shoe, through the sole and the drilled metal strips. Now leave the head of the bolt inside the shoe, leaving the threaded part sticking out. Fasten them by adding a washer and nut.

fig 1,2 - Sub-Saharan migrants show shoes they hacked to have better grip on the 3 m high border fence dividing Morocco from the Spanish enclave of Melilla.

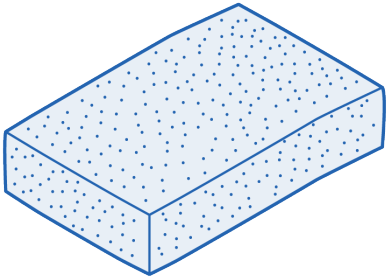
DESERTS

WHAT YOU NEED



fabric
(blanket, clothes)

clothes line



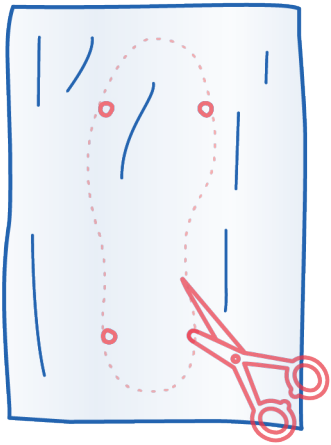
foam rubber
(upholstery)

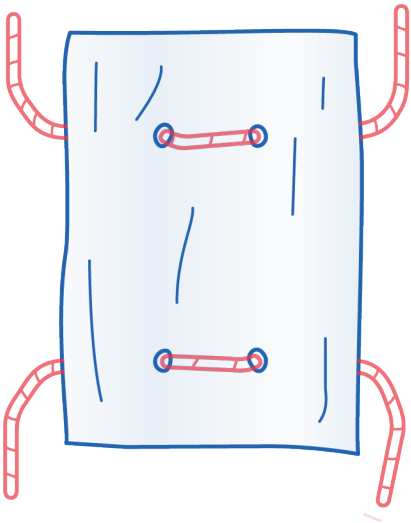
scissors

TRACELESS SHOES

The success of your crossing also depends on how invisible you can be. US agents often patrol dirt roads near the border, looking for fresh footprints as a sign of aliens trying to cross illegally. Designed by Mexican migrants, this allows you to mask your tracks by attaching foam rubber to the bottoms of your shoes.

HOW TO BUILD IT



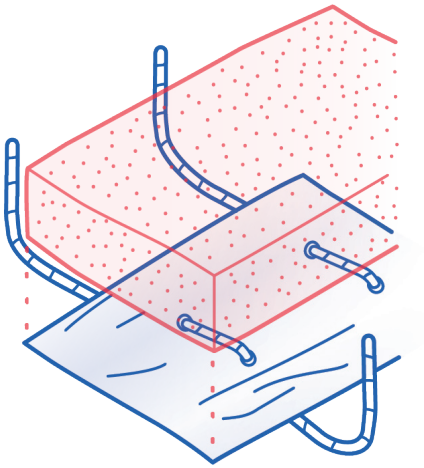


STEP 1

Take 2 rectangular pieces of cloth (something sturdy, like an old blanket), each large enough to contain your shoe. Now cut 4 holes in the fabric, right on the sole's perimeter - 2 on the upper and 2 on the lower part -.

STEP 2

Cut from the clothes line 2 pieces of rope. Each should be the same lenght of the fabric, plus 50 cm on each side.
Pass each though 2 of the holes you've made in the cloth.



STEP 3

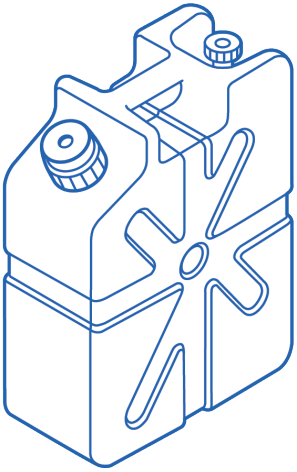
Now take the foam block - which should be about the same size of the cloth - and place it on top of the fabric and ropes.

STEP 4

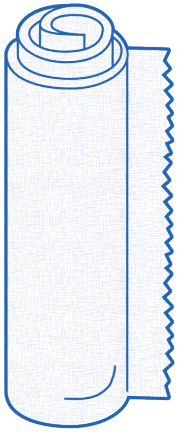
Tie each rope around the shoe: fasten one over the toe tip and the other over the heel cap, making sure the foam fully covers the sole.

fig 1,2 - Mexican aliens in the Yuha Desert, west of Calexico (US), wearing shoes hacked to hide their traces on the sand. The first one glued rubber foam to the sole, the second one wears carpet-soled overshoes.

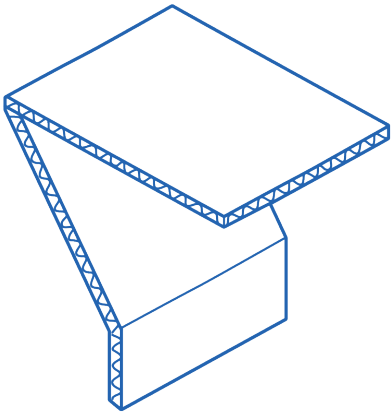
WHAT YOU NEED



jerry can



sackcloth

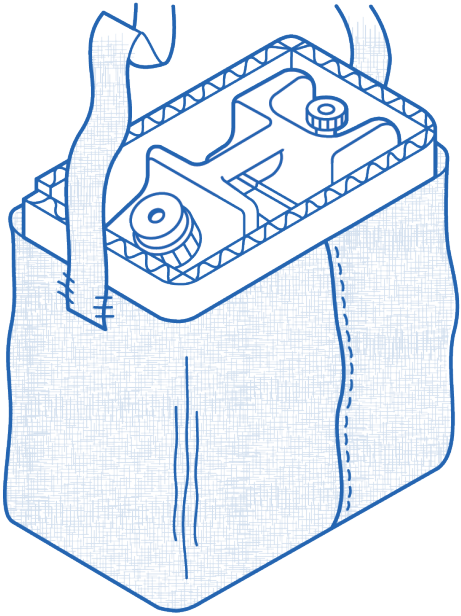


corrugated cardboard

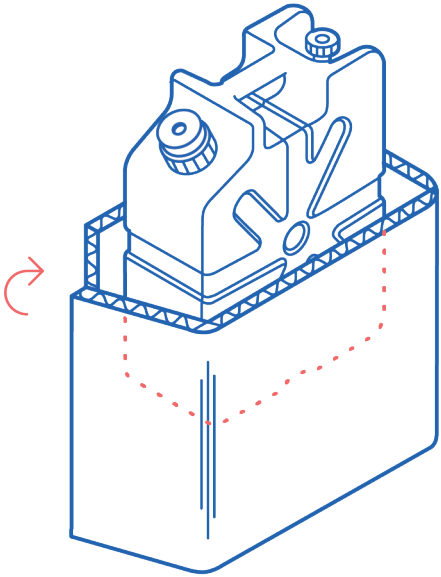
scissors

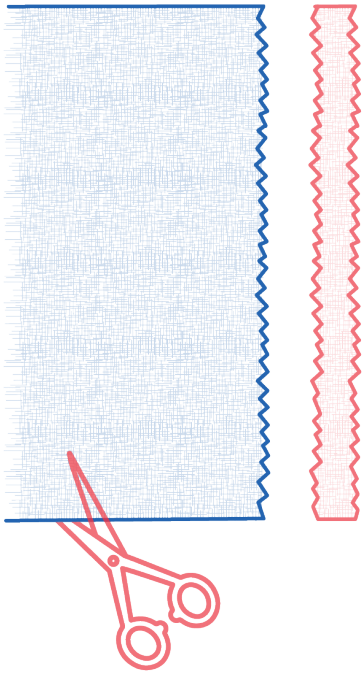
thread

REFRIGERATED JERRYCAN



If you're making the Sahara crossing, you might realise that just carrying water with you is not enough, if it's room temperature - over 40° C -. As thermos are not an option, Sub-Saharan migrants have devised a system to keep water chill, using as little as used oil jerry cans, cardboard and cloth.



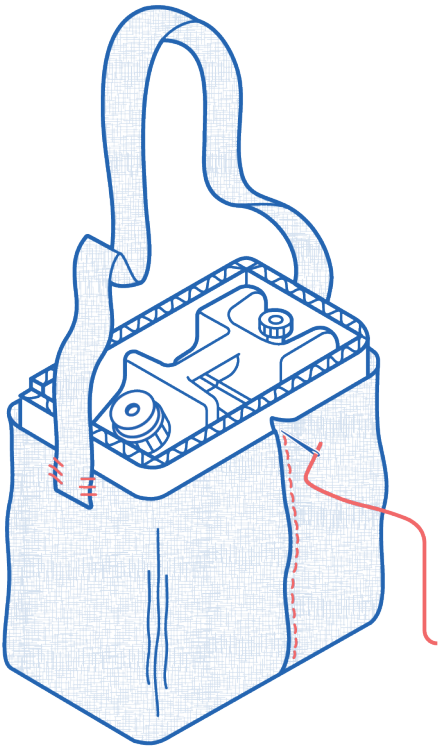


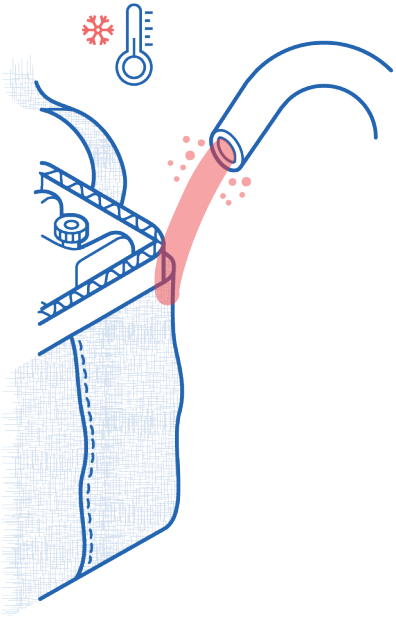
STEP 1

Take a piece of cardboard - the one shipping boxes are made of - large enough to be folded around the body of the jerry-can. If you don't have an entire sheet, you can also join together few smaller pieces.

STEP 2

Take the sackcloth and cut:
1) a piece large enough to fully cover the jerry can wrapped in cardboard,
2) a strip of fabric, at least a few cm large, to be used as shoulder strap.





STEP 3

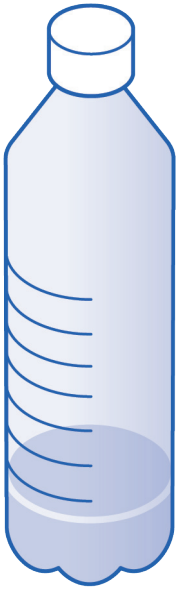
Now sew the sackcloth so that it tightly holds together jerry can and cardboard; then add the shoulder strap.

STEP 4

Every few hours remember to spray some water on the cloth and cardboard. You'll lose some water, but quick evaporation due to high temperatures will keep the remaining one much more drinkable.

Fig 1,2 - Recycled plastic containers, originally used for cooking palm oil, are covered with sackcloth to maintain the water temperature low. These are essential for Sub-Saharan migrants on their way to Libya.

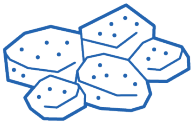
WHAT YOU NEED



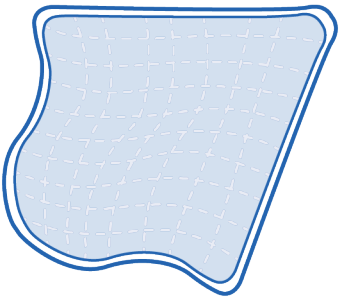
plastic bottle

sand

rocks



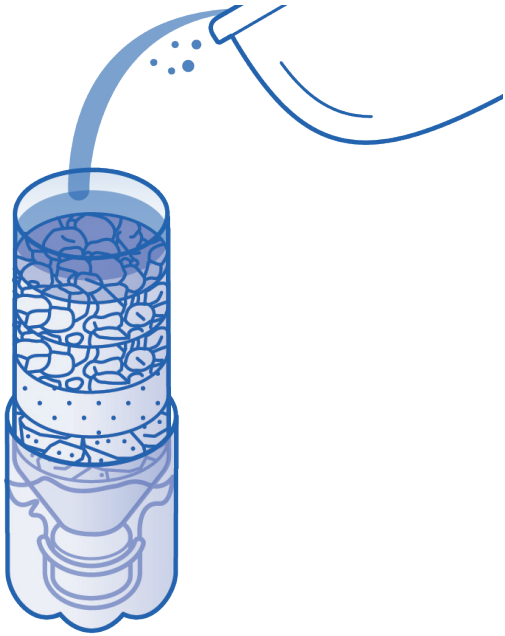
charcoal



thin kitchen towel

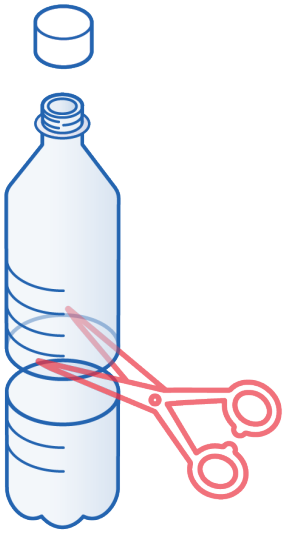
scissors

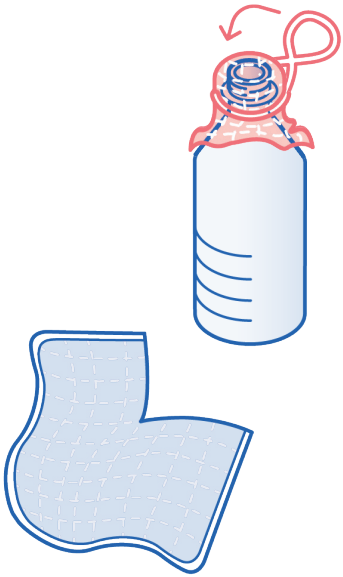
NATURAL WATER FILTER



You will find very few spots to get good water from, on your journey through any desert. But if that water is not pure, you'll likely get sick during the trip - and good luck finding antibiotics over there -.
So, here is a fairly simple way to make sure you stay both healthy and hydrated.

HOW TO BUILD IT



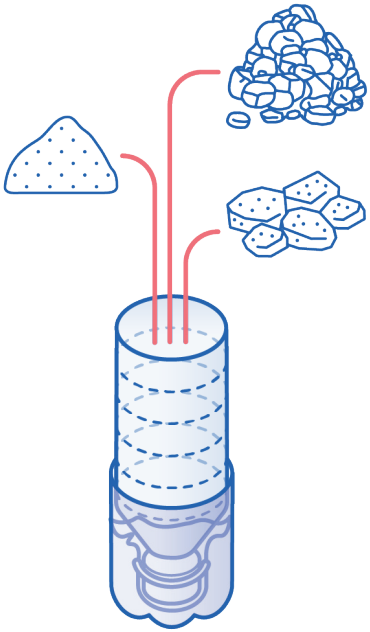


STEP 1

Take a plastic bottle and, having removed the cup, cut it two. Depending on the size of your bottle you'll have to make the cut at a different level: in the centre if it's a 50 cl one; on the lower part if it's a 1 l one.

STEP 2

Cut a piece of cloth, place it over the bottle opening and tie it to the neck - a rubber band is suggested but any piece of string will do the work -.



STEP 3

Now take the top of the bottle with the neck covered with a cloth: turn it upside down and stick it inside the lower part of the bottle.

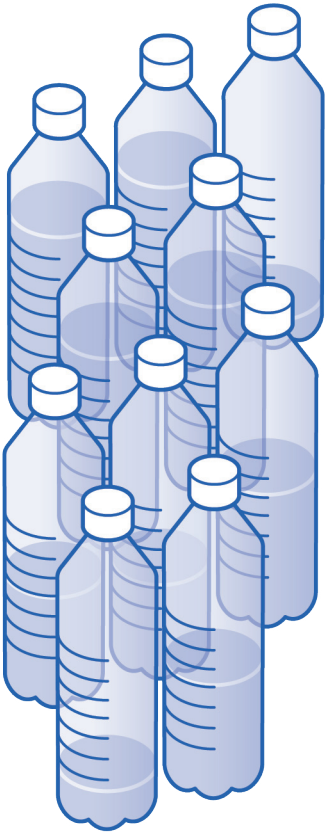
STEP 4

Put inside the bottle, in this order: 1 part of charcoal, 1 of sand and 2 parts of pebbles. Now the water you'll pour in will be purified by the time it gets to the bottom

Fig 1,2 - DIY water filters are a must for survival guides. On YouTube you can easily find many insightful tutorials, as lots of American white men love to tape themselves giving survival tips from their backyard.

WATERS

WHAT YOU NEED

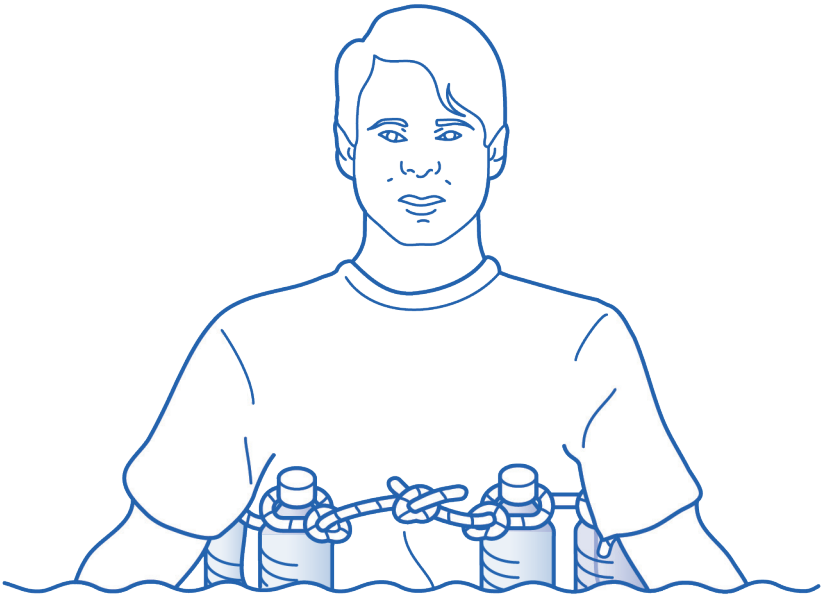


plastic bottles

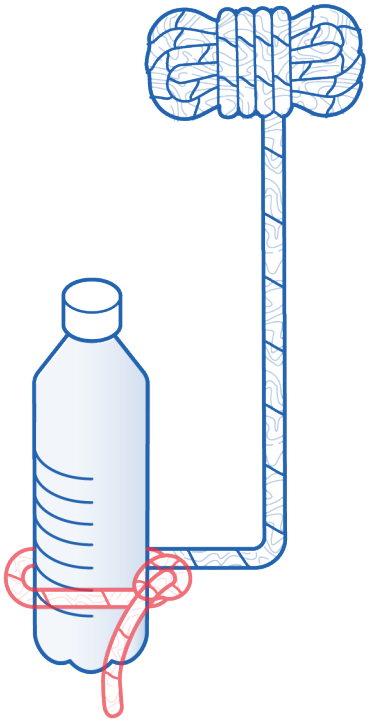
scissors

clothes line

PLASTIC BOTTLES FLOATATION BELT

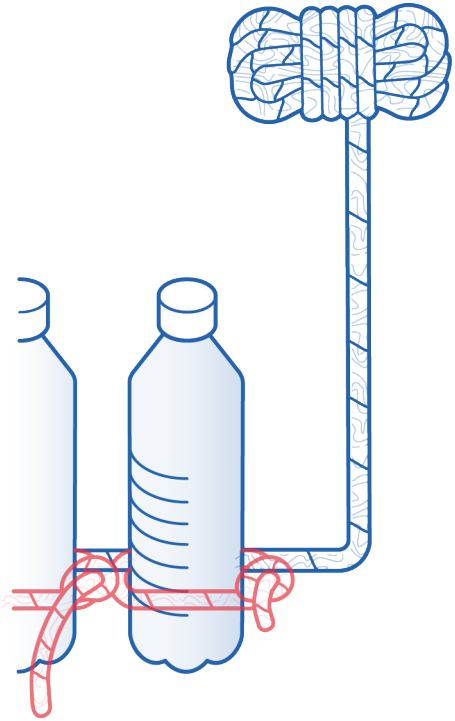


So you're not a great swimmer and a strip of water is dividing you from the place you're trying to reach. I imagine the boat trip has been expensive enough, and the luxury of a lifevest is definitely out of budget. I'll show you how to get the same with just plastic bottles and some rope.



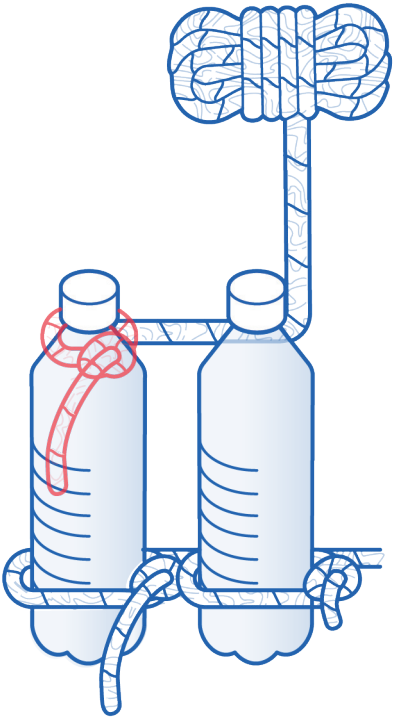
STEP 1

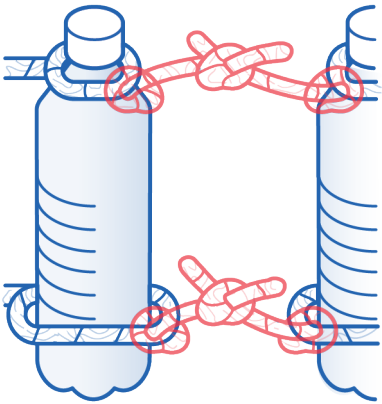
Take the clothes line and wrap it around the lower part of an empty plastic bottle (a 1 lt one is recommended), leaving some length before the first knot.



STEP 2

Tie the same string around another bottle, repeating the same process with 5 to 10 more - according to your waist size and weight -.





STEP 3

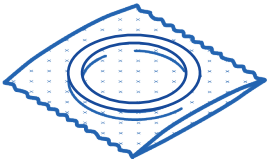
Repeat the same, this time around the cap of each bottle, leaving some length after the last knot. If you can comfortably wrap the belt around the waist, you can now cut both strings.

STEP 4

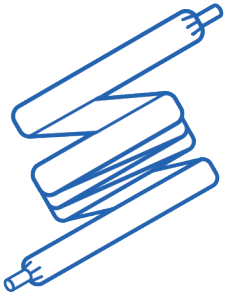
Use the end of the first and last knot to tie the belt around your waist. When all bottles are empty, they'll keep you afloat: the more you've got, the more buoyancy you'll have, even in rough waters.

Fig 1,2 - Bangladeshi migrants equip themselves with DIY floatation belts to cross the border with India in the West Bengal area - ensuring a safer cross through river Padma.

WHAT YOU NEED

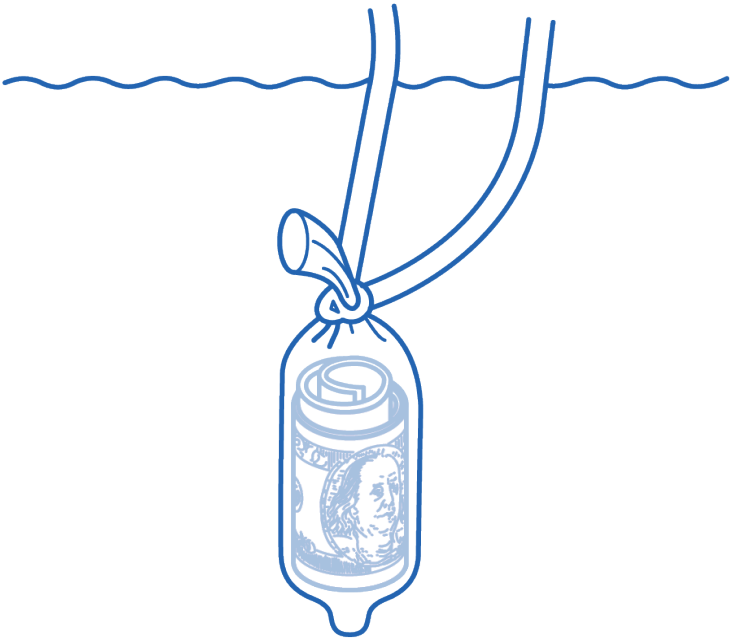


condom



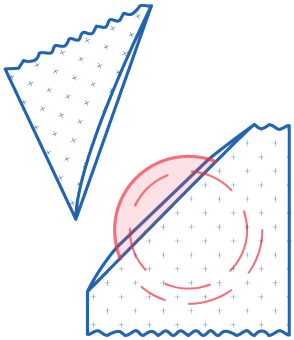
shoe lace

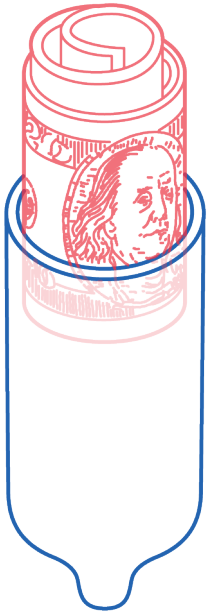
WATERPROOF NECK POUCH



Let's say you are walking through a stream while on your way through the Balkans, sailing through the Mediterranean or swimming across the border between India and Bangladesh. No metter how messy (and wet) it gets, few things - money, ID, smartphone - still need to stay dry.

HOW TO BUILD IT





STEP 1

Take a condom - an inflatable balloon toy could also work, but it will be hard to fit items inside without breaking it - and tear the packaging open.

STEP 2

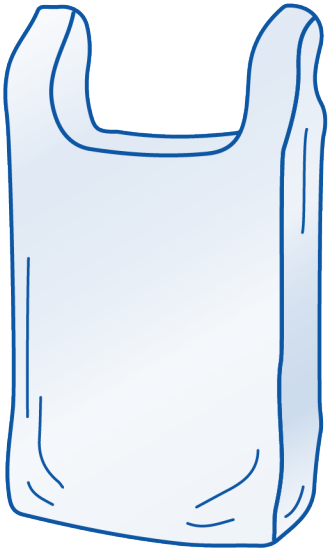
Fit the valuables you are protecting inside the condom, but don't tie it with a knot, or you won't be able to reuse it - as you'll have to tear the film to get the cash out.

STEP 3

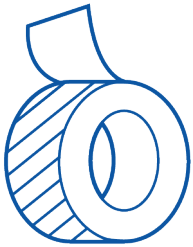
Take a piece of string - some clothline, a shoe lace or anything similar - and tie one end around the condom. Now, pass the rest of the string around your neck and close the hoop, tying the two ends together.

Fig 1 - A street vendor sells balloons to be used as waterproof mobile phones pouches in the backyard of a mosque in Izmir, Turkey.
Fig 2 - A condom used as waterproof pouch, with bills wrapped in it.

WHAT YOU NEED

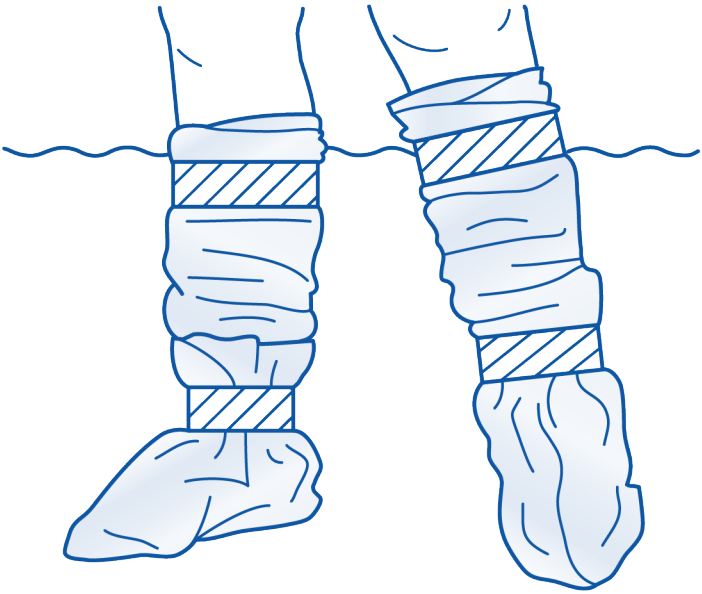


plastic bag

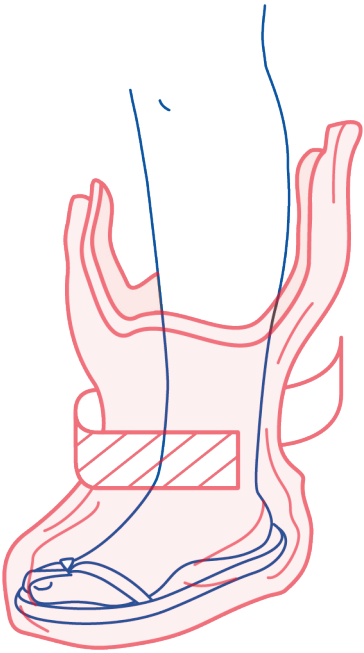


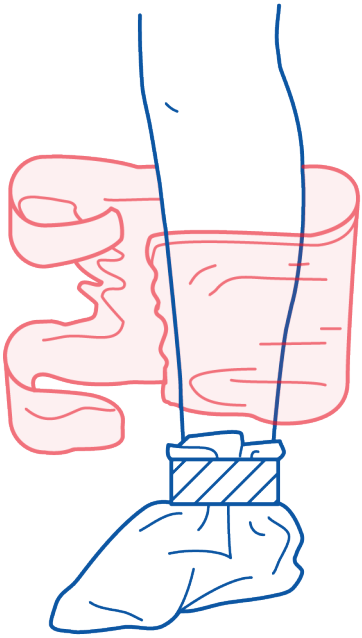
gaffer tape

PLASTIC BAG OVERSHOES



Given the latitude of your home country, it's safe to assume you didn't have rubber boots to pack.
But if you're walking through the Balkans, it comes with all sorts of small streams to cross, loads of rain showers and low temperatures. Here's a quick fix you can easily assemble in the first town you stumble into.



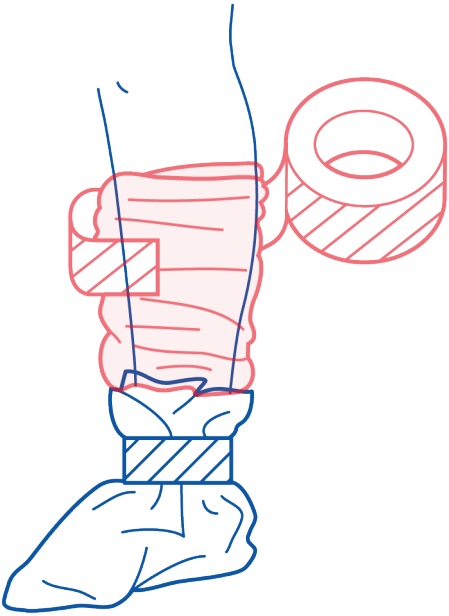


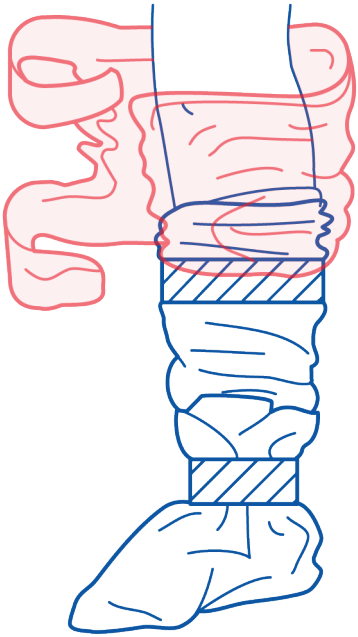
STEP 1

Take a plastic bag and put your foot in it, then tie the bag to your ankle with some gaffer tape. To make sure the bag doesn't tear around the sole, I suggest you use two.

STEP 2

Now take another bag and, this time without opening it, wrap it around your calf. This will make sure water doesn't slip inside your shoes from the top.





STEP 3

As before, wrap some gaffer tape around your calf, so that the bag is tightly pressed against your legs or pants.

STEP 4

If water is higher than your calves, I suggest you wrap another bag around your knee. Same way as before.

Fig 1 - Migrants coming from the warm South struggle with the autumn weather while trying to cross the Serbian-Croatian border.
Fig 2 - Migrants using UNHCR-branded plastic bags as overshoes.

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