

Hallfive

Notebook: Style notes

Created: 11/27/2012 11:55 PM

Tags: face-tini

URL: http://www.hall-five.com/blog_comments/beach-essentials-in-china-flip-flops-a-towel-a...



Both The New York Times and UK's Daily Mail have reported on a Chinese phenomenon, the face-tini!

“One way to avoid the dangerous rays of the sun is to stay indoors, another is to apply a healthy layer of sun cream and slap on a wide-brimmed hat.” The Daily Mail reports, “If you're in China, however, there is a third option - a **'Face-Kini'** complete with a body suit.

The name describes a protective head mask that is being used in Shandong province's East China Sea coast by beach-goers who want to protect their skin from the sun. The Face-tini was invented around seven years ago and is made of stretchy fabric commonly used in bathing suits. The factory-made versions are on sale at swimwear stores along the coast, selling for 15 to 25 yuan (£1 to to £2.50) each. As well as warding off the harmful rays of the sun, the face-tini is also extremely effective at repelling insects and jellyfish.





AFP/AFP/Getty Images
Chinese beachgoers wear face-kinis in Qingdao, northeast China's Shandong province. The face masks allow people to enjoy the water and sand — but not the effects of the sun.



An excerpt from [The New York Times](#)

On a recent afternoon at Qingdao No. 1 Beach, the sand and surf were thronged. Beside the rows of orange beach umbrellas, people had erected dozens of camping tents, ignoring the amplified announcements that prohibited their use. Others made shelters out of multiple umbrellas or just piled on layers of fabric.

South Beach this was not. Some middle-age men chain-smoked in the shallows, their ample bellies bulging over diminutive Speedos. Under the watchful eyes of their parents, naked children built sand castles and relieved themselves in the moats. Older people were enjoying the sand, too, some using it to playfully bury their friends. Few adults were entirely comfortable swimming in the ocean, judging by the ubiquity of inflatable armbands, inner tubes and rafts. **Floating among them, looking like a flock of colorful waterfowl, were a number of women in masks. Some had even donned wet suits for total sun protection.**

The masks are a specialty of Qingdao, a German colony before World War I that is home to the Tsingtao Brewery. A few weeks ago, photographs of local women wearing such attire spread widely on the Internet, setting off mockery online but also a run on nearby shops.

“I just had to have one,” said Liu Jia, 32, the whites of her eyes gleaming through the holes of a pink mask, which matched the polka-dot sarong tied around her shoulders. Finding the item, she said, had proved arduous, with many store owners refusing to admit they had masks in stock. “I had to beg and plead,” she said.

The sudden scarcity, it turns out, may not have been a simple case of demand outrunning supply. After the photographs caught the attention of the nation, the local government ordered businesses to stop selling them, according to several shop owners, who said they were told the ban was due to concerns over “quality control.”

One seller, who declined to be identified for fear of angering the authorities, kept her supply of masks hidden under the counter. Only after repeated requests and vows of secrecy did she agree to part with one for 20 renminbi, about \$3. "I don't understand why the government is doing this," she said, glancing nervously at the front door. "People just don't want to get tan."

Reached by phone, the Qingdao Administration for Industry and Commerce denied playing the role of fashion police. "Anybody who wants one is free to buy it in Qingdao," said a man who gave his name as Director He.

So what explains the skittishness of so many proprietors? "The only reason why people think they shouldn't be selling masks," he replied, "is probably because they're afraid thugs might use them for robbing banks."