



the two-way

international

On Chinese Beaches, The Face-Kini Is In Fashion

by BILL CHAPPELL

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AFP/AFP/Getty Images

In China, it's the height of the tourist season for Qingdao's famed beaches. But while many of the town's visitors want to enjoy the sand and water, they're not so wild about sunbathing. So they often resort to a local tradition: the face-kini, a sort of light cloth version of a ski mask.

Often paired with a long-sleeved shirt, the face-kini reportedly costs from \$2.40 to \$4; many residents simply make their own, out of old clothes. But observers could be forgiven for thinking they've stumbled onto a vacation community for superheroes in Qingdao, a city across the East China Sea from South Korea.

The beachgoers aren't showing their support for the balaclava-wearing Russian band Pussy Riot. And as *Le Monde* notes, they're not fans of the film *Kick-Ass*. Instead, the newspaper says, the head-cover reflects "an ancient sentiment in China, like numerous other countries: a terror of tanning."



AFP/AFP/Getty Images

In many cultures, a tan doesn't imply health and leisure, as it often does in Western advertising. Instead, it's seen as a connection to outdoor work, and the peasantry. Preserving one's pale skin, the thinking goes, implies that you lead a pampered, successful life.

Of course, there's another way to accomplish that goal, and still beat the heat: visit an indoor pool. And that's what Chinese folks do by the tens of thousands. But even that has created a stir.

Photos of a few of China's gargantuan pools and water parks made news earlier this month — in part for the mass of humanity that seems to fill every foot of available space, and in part because web surfers were scandalized by what they called unsanitary conditions.

The Chinese bulletin board site tt.mop posted several photos showing thousands of people enjoying their (very) close proximity to one another. More than one commenter on the story had the same idea: "dense phobia."

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