

Mixed-Gender Hot Spring in Yubara Pleads with Visitors to Cover Their Bodies

In the Yubara Hot Spring village near Maniwa City, northern Okayama Prefecture, operators of the mixed-gender outdoor hot spring Sunayu are considering providing special bathing suits for men. It's a countermeasure against guests who ignore the rule of covering one's body with a towel when bathing.

There is also a proposal for the strategic placement of monitoring staff to prevent the unwanted sight of full-body nakedness.

Sunayu is located directly below Yubara Dam. The hot spring is called Sunayu (sand spring) because, along with the spring water, sand spews out from the riverbed.

It is a public open-air hot spring, maintained regularly by the general incorporated Yubara Sightseeing Association, comprised of staff from the local area and city.

At Sunayu, visitors can soak in the hot spring and enjoy the view of the dam any time of the day, free of charge. The website boasts that the hot spring was chosen as "the Yokozuna of the West" for its high-quality water by a travel author in his Japan Open-air Hot Spring rankings.

Sunayu has been a popular destination as a mixed-gender outdoor hot spring for many years. In consideration of its wide variety of visitors, a rule was established in 2014 requiring those using the bath to cover their lower body with a towel or swimsuit. Recently, though, there has been a rise in complaints about bathers who breach etiquette by not covering their lower body.

However, using an ordinary bath towel to cover one's body can be inconvenient. Towels can become heavy and cling to the body when they absorb water. As a solution, Yubara Tourism Association collaborated with Wacoal (Kyoto) to design and introduce special bathing suits for women in June 2014. These polyester bathing suits are water repellent and can be purchased or rented at nearby inns.

The introduction of men's bathing suits was also considered at the time. However, the proposal was put on hold due to the relative ease of using hand towels to cover men's bodies.

Still, some customers didn't follow the rules. The issue became of greater concern with a surge of foreign visitors coming to Yubara Hot Spring Village. "Foreigners often dislike seeing nakedness or being seen naked," said Hiroaki Ikeda, head of the association, who stressed the need to improve bathing manners.

In November 2016, the association called for improvements. It began by trying to address the problem by putting signs in nearby parking lots, along roads, and in changing rooms, saying, "Please Cover your Lower Body."

[GO TO THE NEXT PAGE]

‘It’s Driving Away Ordinary Visitors’

The association started considering men’s bathing suits because they were requested by some male visitors. At the same time, it was believed such measures would serve as an indication of the local community’s determination to prevent naked bathing. Other ideas have also been proposed, including the free distribution of disposable underwear and staff placed strategically at the entrance to Sunayu.

Signs to cover the lower body are aimed primarily towards men, but some women are also breaking the rules.

“Many visitors feel too awkward to use the hot spring because of the few people who don’t follow the rule. Because of these few people, ordinary visitors come all the way to the hot spring just to look at it from the outside and leave,” complained Ikeda.

He recounted that some visitors who came with their children left without getting near the hot spring baths because the sight of naked people made them feel uncomfortable.

“There are differing views on strictly enforcing the prohibition of naked bathing, but the locals want children to enjoy the hot spring safely and without worry,” explained Ikeda.

The association has gathered opinions on the ideal mixed-gender bathing conditions and expects to begin implementing new measures before the end of 2019.

Source: **Mixed-Gender Hot Spring in Yubara Pleads with Visitors to Cover Their Bodies**
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「隠そう下半身」…混浴露天風呂悩ませる「全裸客」

岡山県北部の湯原温泉郷（同県真庭市）の一つで川沿いにある混浴露天風呂「砂湯」が男性用湯あみ着を導入する検討を始めた。というのも、砂湯はタオルなどで体を隠して入浴するのがルールだが、従わない入浴客が後を絶たないためだ。目に余る“全裸入浴”を防ぐため、関係者の間では監視スタッフの配置案も浮上している。

「隠そう下半身」

湯原ダムの直下に位置する砂湯。川底から砂を吹き上げて湯がわき出るため、その名がついた。市や地元の一般社団法人「湯原観光協会」などが定期的に清掃している公営露天風呂で、眼前に迫るダムの迫力を楽しみながら、入場無料で24時間入浴できる。泉質の良さもあり、以前に旅行作家がまとめた「全国露天風呂番付」の「西の横綱」としても知られる。

昔から混浴として親しまれてきたが、近年は一部の入浴客による下半身を隠さないマナー違反が目につくようになったとの指摘が増加。平成24年、タオルや水着などで下半身を隠すことがルール化された。

ただ、普通のバスタオルで体を隠す場合、水を吸うと体に張り付くし、重たくなってしまう。そこで、湯原観光協会は、快適に入浴できるようにと26年6月、女性下着大手のワコール（京都市）と女性向けの湯あみ着を共同開発で導入。湯あみ着はポリエステル製で水はけがよく、近隣の旅館などでレンタル・購入することができる。

このとき、男性向けの湯あみ着も検討されたが、ハンドタオルでの代替が比較的容易なことなどから導入は見送られた。

しかしその後も、一部にマナーを守らない客は残っていた。それに加え、湯原温泉郷を訪れる外国人観光客が増加。同協会の池田博昭・代表理事は「外国人の方は、見るのも見られるのも嫌がる方が多い」としており、マナー向上の必要性を強調する。

こうした状況を受け、協会は28年11月、「隠そう下半身」と書いた看板を砂湯周辺の駐車場や路上、脱衣場に掲出し、改善を呼びかけた。

「一般客が入れない」

今回、導入の検討を始めた男性用湯あみ着は、男性客からの要望に応じる面もあるが、「裸では入らさない」という地元の意思表示でもある。協会ではほかに、無料の簡易パンツを配布したり、砂湯の入り口にスタッフを配置したりする案も出ている。

一方、「隠そう下半身」は男性を対象にしたものといえるが、隠さないのは男性ばかりではなく女性にもいるのだという。池田代表理事は「一部の人たちのせいで、普通の人が恥ずかしくて温泉に入れなくなっている状況がある。せっかく砂湯まで来たのに、外から見るだけで帰ってしまう人も多い」と嘆く。そうした光景に親子連れが躊躇（ちゅうちょ）し、結局温泉に入らなかったこともあるという。

「風呂なのに『裸で入らせない』ことを徹底することには賛否もある。ただ、地元としては子供たちにも安心、安全に楽しんでもらえるようにしていきたい」と池田代表理事。協会では温泉郷の関係者から混浴入浴のあり方について意見を取りまとめた上で、年内にも各種対策に踏み切る考えを示している。

出典：「隠そう下半身」…混浴露天風呂悩ませる「全裸客」

<https://www.sankei.com/west/news/190930/wst1909300017-n1.html>