《沙特打造冰雪城：男女不限，有钱你就来！》

导读:在一个公共场合因性别而隔离起来、女性运动被认为是有罪的国家里，这种新的男女混合的娱乐项目对形形色色压抑太久的沙特人来说是个难得的机会。

RIYADH—At a shopping mall in southern Riyadh, a woman shrouded in black robes and bulgy black coat throws snowballs at her young son, giggling underneath a face covering. The boy gleefully lobs snowy projectiles back in her direction.

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Nearby, children in neon snow suits stand squealing under a spray of ice droplets. Others trudge up a snowy hill with parents, before cascading down ice slides in inflatable tubes.

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"It’s freezing," one little girl exclaims, teeth chattering, even as temperatures outside exceed 45 Celsius (113 Fahrenheit).

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There is no music to drown out the drone of air conditioners inside the Snow City theme park in the Saudi Arabian capital, in keeping with the kingdom’s strict interpretation of Islam.

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But in a country where rigid public morality codes keep most public spaces segregated by gender and discourage women’s sports as sinful, the new mixed-gender attraction is a rare opportunity for Saudis of all stripes to blow off steam.

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"It’s awesome that this is allowed for us," said Bedour, a bubbly 19-year-old, who kept her face covered but traded her black robes for a colorful snowsuit. "Women in Saudi Arabia are required to wear abayas [loose-fitting, full-length robes] whenever they’re outside."

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“In here, it’s different." Entertainment offerings and physical activities are severely limited in the Islamic kingdom, especially during the withering summer months, something reformers led by Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman are trying to change as part of a wide-ranging program to transform the Saudi economy and society.

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The Vision 2030 plan, announced in April, pledged new cultural venues, entertainment partnerships, tourist attractions and athletic clubs, hoping they will invigorate the private sector and inspire Saudis to lead healthier lifestyles. It wants culture and entertainment to absorb 6 percent of Saudi household spending by 2030, up from 2.9 percent now.

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Theme parks exist, but unlike Snow City are mostly subject to gender-based timings to prevent mixing of unrelated men and women. Many Saudis descend on nearby Gulf states, where water parks and indoor skiing have been available for years.

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"We used to have to go to Dubai in order to play in the snow. once this snow city started up, people started coming here... It’s attracting tourists. Thank God," said Nawal, 20.

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The Snow City is a private venture by Al-Othaim Leisure & Tourism Company, but it has the clear blessing of the government, which sent the governor of Riyadh province, Prince Faisal bin Bandar al-Saud, to inaugurate the facility.

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Some 1,500 people visit daily, said a manager. "People are having fun," he said. "So let’s do it, let’s try it."

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