



Participants in the fashion show

Sora Fes: Sharing a Sense of Wonder

An unusual festival is pulling in the crowds for its outer-space-themed fashion show, shops and night-sky attractions.

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Speakers and visitors come from all walks of life



Stargazing is a popular attraction at the festival



All photos: Courtesy of SORA FES



SORA Fes, an event that aims to familiarize people with outer space, has been held in Arashiyama, Kyoto on an autumn day when the moon is near full every year since 2014. Over 6,000 people attend the event. Since November 2019, the event has also started to be held in Nihonbashi, Tokyo.

Many people attend Sora Fes sporting their own fashion creations—accessories or clothes on the theme of outer space. During the event, visitors are invited to participate in a fashion contest, a feature of the festival which has been growing in popularity, according to Ikegawa Keiko of the Sora Fes steering committee. Participants demonstrate their ingenuity either by creating costumes from scratch or altering clothes having space or star motifs in their pursuit of the coveted grand prize.

Sora Fes started when a manufacturer of astronomy telescopes and other optical instruments consulted the event production company for which Ikegawa works in order to expand its customer base. Ikegawa planned Sora Fes to be held in an easy-to-access location so that a wide variety of people could take part.

Sora Fes comprises a variety of events, including a panel discussion with speakers from different fields, recently featuring an engineer from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and a rock musician, for example. Another popular event is the astronomy telescopes party, while the market for the retail of handmade products has been a huge success since the first Sora Fes.

“We asked creators selling space-themed products on websites to bring their products to Sora Fes,” says Ikegawa. “We initially expected about 1,000 visitors,

but more than 3,000 attended and bought up all the products so quickly.”

At the market’s booths, visitors can find accessories such as gemstones connected like planetary constellations and smartphone cases decorated with a starlit sky. At the first Sora Fes, many of the young women who visited the market not only bought products from their favorite creators, but also wore items they had made themselves, which attracted the attention of the event staff. This is what led to the launch of the aforementioned fashion contest – initially called Sora Girl – at the second Sora Fes. Participants in the fashion contests, led by young people with an interest in space or the starry skies, were young women at first, but over time the number of participating parents, children and men has increased.

Encouraged by the contest, middle-aged and elderly male space enthusiasts now come to Sora Fes wearing themed clothes, including JAXA or NASA work uniforms. At the most recent Sora Fes, the entire venue was buzzing with happy, enthusiastic visitors of all ages, both male and female.

The Sora Fes steering committee intends to increase the number of experience-based activities in the future, and they have begun reaching out to start-ups in the field of outer space to get them involved in the event.

“Sora Fes should be a place for visitors to feel a sense of wonder,” says Ikegawa. “The reasons why each person visits the event will differ. It may be for their interest in fashion, culture or science, but everybody looks up at the same sky, imagining the limitless reaches of outer space.”

Ikegawa wants to share that sense of wonder. 