

TUNISIA: GOLF TOURISM FIGHTING INSUFFICIENT PROMOTION



Lack of golf courses and air routes identified as the obstacles for further development of Tunisian golf tourism. Insufficient promotion of the country in European markets is also problematic.

Tunisia was one of the first Mediterranean countries to engage in golf tourism. The first course was constructed on the shores of Carthage already in 1924. **However with 250,000 green fees and 70,000 golfers per year on average, representing 1.2% of the European market, Tunisian golf industry is still marginalized in the Mediterranean,** reported Tourmag.com.

According to the conclusions of a recent professional golf meeting organized in Tunis, the reason for the dire situation is the inactivity of the industry's stakeholders. While Turkey, Morocco and Egypt have intensively worked on promoting their golf courses and attracting golf tourists, Tunisia has to face several obstacles preventing dynamic development of the sector.

One of the problems pointed out at the meeting is the insufficient number of golf courses in the north African country. **Currently there are 10 operational golf courses, representing about 180 holes.** Mr. Habib Ferchichi, CEO of Tourism Real Estate Agency (AFT), announced at the meeting that five new courses will be open very soon and that five others are planned. However, as the experts pointed out Tunisia can not catch up with its competitors only by doubling the number of the courses.

Another serious problem affecting not only the golf industry is the lack of air routes connecting the country with major European markets. "For instance, we are losing the Scandinavian markets, which are very promising, because of the lack of air routes," said Omrane Khelil, manager of golf courses in Monastir city, quoted by Tourmag.com.

Insufficient promotion of Tunisia as a tourism destination in Europe, where the number of golfers is estimated at 3.5 million, is also a serious obstacle to further development of local golf tourism. **"Europe has about 24 specialized trade fairs where Tunisia participates only occasionally - mostly due to the lack of funds,"** explained Khelil.

According to the Director General of the Tunisian National Tourist Office (ONTT), Mr. Mohamed Maali, a new project has been recently adopted by the government and the tourism board aiming at the development of golf tourism. "Besides the construction of ten new golf courses, we also plan to intensify our marketing efforts in Europe as well as to launch new air routes," he said. Golfers

represent an attractive group of tourists since when on holiday they spend 50-100% more money than other travelers.

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