

Ras Al Khaimah brings European Challenge Tour to the UAE in 2016



Ras Al Khaimah Golf Challenge Official signing the RAK Golf Challenge.

The inaugural Ras Al Khaimah Golf Challenge will see the European Challenge Tour, sponsored by Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, return to the United Arab Emirates in 2016.

The event will be hosted at Al Hamra Golf Club from Wednesday 26 to Saturday 29 October. This is the first time the European Challenge Tour has visited Ras Al Khaimah and will be one of the emirate's top sporting events in 2016.

The tournament, with a prize fund of \$350,000 up for grabs, will be sanctioned locally by the Emirates Golf Federation.

It will take up a key position in the 2016 schedule as the Challenge Tour's penultimate event, the week before the season-ending climax, the NBO Golf Classic Grand Final.

Haitham Mattar, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority said: "Hosting the European Challenge Tour is part of our commitment to golf tourism in the emirate and highlights the importance we are placing on the sport in 2016 and beyond.

"The world-class golf course at Al Hamra Golf Club is the ideal location for such a prestigious event, and we look forward to welcoming golf enthusiasts from around the world to the tournament."

A field of a minimum of 85 Challenge Tour players plus a further 20 sponsors' invitations of professionals and amateurs via the participating Federations can include Arab Nationals and expatriates with an appropriate handicap.

The event will be the Challenge Tour players' final opportunity to secure a place in the season-ending Grand Final at Almouj Golf in Muscat, Oman, open only to the top 45 Challenge Tour players on the Road to Oman Rankings.

Nick Tarratt, Director, European Tour International, Dubai, commented: "The launch of a Challenge Tour event in Ras Al Khaimah will provide the Al Hamra golf course with the opportunity to showcase the club, resort and emirate through our 'play where the pros play' mantra to a worldwide audience via our television and global media platforms."

The Challenge Tour is 'Where Heroes Are Made' –the European Tour's development tour and where the likes of Henrik Stenson, Justin Rose, Martin Kaymer, Jamie Donaldson, Stephen Gallacher, Ian Poulter, Thomas Bjørn, Bernd Wiesberger and Branden Grace have all graduated from and become stars on the big stage.

The par 72 Championship eighteen-hole golf course, designed by Peter Harradine and measuring 7,325 yards, meanders around four inter-connected open water lagoons merging seamless with the water of the Arabian Gulf.

The announcement signals a welcome return to the UAE for the Challenge Tour following in the footsteps of the Challenge Tour Grand Final which was held in Dubai in 2013 and 2014.

The addition of the Ras Al Khaimah Golf Challenge to the Challenge Tour schedule means that there will now be seven significant European Tour golf initiatives on the Middle East golf calendar, along with: the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship; the Commercialbank Qatar Masters; the Omega Dubai Desert Classic; the DP World Tour Championship, the Abu Dhabi Invitational and the NBO Golf Classic Grand Final.