

Challenge Tour event puts RAK on golf tourism map



Tourism chiefs in Ras Al Khaimah will use their drive to build the northern emirate as a world-class golf destination following the successful staging of the European Challenge Tour event last weekend.

The first Ras Al Khaimah 2016 Golf Challenge saw the Challenge Tour stars display their skills at Al Hamra Golf Club and the event “exceeded expectations” for those involved.

This widespread acclaim is music to the ears of Haitham Mattar, CEO of tournament organisers Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA).

“We were always confident the emirate would deliver a world-class event befitting its status as the penultimate round on this year’s European Challenge Tour,” said Mattar.

“The initial feedback has been nothing short of extraordinary and we’re already looking forward to delivering an even stronger event in 2017.

“With the experiences of this year under our belts, we are intent on engaging our industry partners to ensure Ras Al Khaimah delivers an emirate-wide festival of golf in 2017.”



Nick Tarratt, Director of the Dubai office of the PGA European Tour, added: “All the players, without exception, have been complimentary of the fine golf course at Al Hamra Golf Club.

“The key additional factors for a good week for the Challenge Tour are the proximity of the players’ hotels and accommodation to the golf course and, finally, the weather. Ras Al Khaimah has exceeded all our expectations in all areas.”

With RAKTDA holding the right to stage the penultimate European Challenge Tour event for another two years, Robert Fiala, Marketing Manager of the Emirates Golf Federation, is optimistic the tournament is here to stay.

“What’s been delivered is a great example of the level of sporting event that Ras Al Khaimah can host – it’s been top class,” said Fiala.

“This is only the first year and it’s been great. As the tournament ages and evolves it will attract more spectators and more sponsors will want to support its growth.”

After four days of sun-drenched fairways, Al Hamra Golf Club course designer **Peter Harradine** believes it held up well to the 105-strong professional field.

Harradine, the Principal & Senior Architect of Harradine Golf, said: “It played quite long this week but it’s important to remember this is a tourist course. It was designed and built to be accessible for amateurs and regular players so the fairways are forgivingly wide and there’s no real rough. “It’s proven to be a good challenge and the course has helped shape a dramatic ending to Ras Al Khaimah’s first professional golf event. It’s been a fantastic week and the emirate is now planted firmly on the professional golf map.”

Jordan Smith wrote his name into UAE golf folklore by claiming victory in the inaugural Ras Al Khaimah 2016 Golf Challenge.