Golf Greece

Tailoring the backbone

The 1960s and 1970s rightfully rank as the only era when a dedication was evident from the central administration to lay the foundations of a golfing destination. The country's first 18-hole course opened in Glyfada, Athens, neighboring the former US military base. Two additional courses were developed strategically in the northwestern edge (Corfu Island) and southeast (Rodos Island). The design of all three courses were assigned to Swiss-based golf course architect Donald Harradine. This 18-hole course triad would consist the backbone of the national golfing infrastructure for the following three decades.

The story of Glyfada Golf Course began in the early 1960s, when the National Tourist Organization of Greece (EOT) started site preparations in the namesake southern suburb of Athens. The course opened in 1962 as a 9-hole and a year later as a full 18-hole layout. The initial numbering of the holes was different to the current one and a small river was crossing current holes 18,16,15,10,1,9, the bed of which was covered later on. On 1965, "Shell's Wonderful World of Golf" television series was hosted on the course on a match between Roberto De Vincenzo and Tony Lema with Gene Sarazen on the commentary (the impressive coverage of the full match can be watched here). In 1966, 198 founding members established Glyfada Golf Club of Athens and soon took charge of the course's administrative role, shifting its status to a members club.

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Over in Corfu island, Charalampos Tsaoussoglou, businessman and close friend of Konstantinos Karamanlis, trusted the Prime Minister's instinct and belief on effectively luring upscale tourism through a golf course investment and bought a land in the heart of Ropa valley for that exact matter. The club was designed in 1967 and completed in 1971. It has remained under the same family administration status ever since and remains the course with the most water hazards in Greece by implementing 7 ponds, each representing one of the seven islands of the Ionian sea.



In 1973 the National Tourist Organization of Greece also inaugurated Afandou Golf Course in Rodos island on a pristine location spanning across the eastern shoreline of the island. At the same time, in northern Greece, shipowner Giannis Karras started constructing a luxury complex along with vast extents of vineyards, olive groves, gardens and a golf course in a cove near Neos Marmaras. Karras had found a safe haven in this cove a few years earlier, during a yacht trip under fierce weather and decided to own this land. The impressive main hotel building (Meliton) was designed by none other than Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus movement. The golf course still consists the solitary golf course in continental northern Greece.

