

## Chbika resort in Morocco moving forward

January 25, 2012

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The long-delayed Chbika resort in Morocco's Sahara Desert has begun to show a pulse.

Orascom Development Holding AG has had the 1,235-acre community on its to-do list since the mid 2000s, but the venture was swept aside in the wake of the global economic collapse. However, just months ago Orascom announced that it hopes to complete the first phase of construction at Chbika by the end of 2012, the second phase in late 2015.

To be sure, those phases will include plenty of construction.

Chbika, originally known as Chbika Sahara Atlantique, has been master-planned to include eight or more hotels (2,500 total rooms), 1,851 apartments and villas, a town center, a marina with berths for 100 boats, a sports center, a spa, a medical center, and what's been described as a tournament-worthy golf course.

Without question, the resort will be the biggest thing to ever hit the village of Chbika, which is located along the Atlantic coast in a remote part of southwestern Morocco, near the town of Tan-Tan.

These days Chbika may be hard to find, but Orascom will find a way to get vacationers there. The company, led by Samih Sawiris, made its reputation with two huge, wildly popular resorts in Egypt: El Gouna, which is along the Red Sea, and Taba Heights, which is along the Gulf of Aqaba, on the Sinai Peninsula. El Gouna has an 18-hole course co-designed by Fred Couples and Gene Bates, with a planned second 18 that will be co-designed by Karl Litten and Jeffrey Myers. The course at Taba Heights was designed by John Sanford.

El Gouna serves as the template for communities that Orascom has in the pipeline. Currently under construction is Andermatt, a mountain resort in the Swiss Alps that will include a course designed by Kurt Rossknecht, a German architect. Still to come are Lustica, a waterfront spread along Montenegro's Adriatic coast, and two communities in Oman, Salalah Beach (Litten and Myers) and Jebel Sifah.

**Peter Harradine**, a Swiss architect known for designing player-friendly tracks, will design the golf courses at Jebel Sifah and Chbika.

The track at Golf Club Oued Chbika could someday be extended to 27 holes, and some early reports about the resort promised 36 holes. Harradine isn't sure when Orascom will break ground on the track, due to environmental concerns regarding its site. "The project is definitely going ahead," he wrote in an e-mail late last year, "but I know that they have problems with the building permits for the golf course, mainly because the layout is partly within the wadi, which is a sensitive ecological area."

Orascom is developing Chbika with Caisse de Depot des Gestion, a big Moroccan investment firm. The partners are operating as Oued Chbika Development.

*This story originally appeared in the World Edition of the Golf Course Report, in a slightly different form. For a sample copy of the World Edition, call 301/680-9460 or write to [WorldEdition@aol.com](mailto:WorldEdition@aol.com).*