

# Golf Inc.™

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# TOP 25 Development Hotspots

We rated 162 countries to find the 25 that have the greatest capacity for new golf courses. Find out why the UAE and France make the list and China and Morocco do not.

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# Philippine promise

Robust growth bodes well for the Philippines' golf industry, but only if the country can expand the sport beyond private clubs and tourism

BY JAMES GRAHAM PRUSA

When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November, images of the massive devastation were beamed across the globe, leaving many to wonder about its impact on the nation's economy.

But the economy has been so robust that not even a super typhoon could slow down it nor the nation's emerging golf industry.

The Philippine economy finished 2013 with a robust 7.2 percent growth rate. Asia's newest economic tiger has now sustained record setting growth for two years — its greatest period of prosperity since the post Pacific War reconstruction boom of the 1950s, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Additionally, according to The World Bank, foreign direct investment in the Philippines has nearly doubled since 2008, and Fitch Ratings, Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's have published investment-grade scores for the nation for the first time.

Tourism is helping to fuel the country's growth, and that bodes well for golf. The number of visitors in 2013 increased by almost 10 percent, much due to travel from other Asian countries, according to the nation's Department of Tourism. Almost 25 percent of visitors come from Korea, followed by the United States at 14.4 percent and Japan at 9.3 percent.

But China is pushing the growth. While Chinese visitors currently make up only 9.1 percent of the traffic, that is nearly 70 percent higher than a year before, the DOT reported.

"I am passionately optimistic that golf will grow in the Philippines over the next decade," said Tommy Manotoc, presi-



Anvaya Cove Golf and Sports Club

dent of the National Golf Association of the Philippines. "NGAP intends to play a key role in this. We formed the NGAP to promote the amateur sport of golf and to build relations with other key amateur organizations in ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asia Nations] and throughout Asia."

Manotoc said there are still challenges facing golf, including competition for land and other infrastructure needs.

The Aquino administration is pressing forward to increase government spending on infrastructure, and most agree this is essential to attracting increased foreign investment and golf course ownership.

At present, the majority of the nation's 94 golf course facilities have been developed as exclusively private membership clubs, with only a handful of public access facilities.

"The game has developed in this nation as a private membership business model just as it has done in every country," Manotoc said. "But as the country further advances, I expect there will be a shift to develop more public access facilities and to encourage more young people to take



up the game. We want to teach young people the sport to promote its many excellent virtues that make good citizens."

If the rapidly improving economic prosperity can translate into substantive growth of the middle class, then golf course development could be spurred by new demand, experts say. That potential is being taken seriously and acted on by some of the leading companies in the Philippines.

Ayala Corp., one of the oldest and most highly respected conglomerate corporations in the Philippines, recently acquired

Fort Bonifacio as a large tract of undeveloped property in the metro Manila area, and in the fall it opened a highly regarded design by Golf Plan: Anvaya Cove Golf and Sports Club, near Subic. It is rumored that more golf developments are being viewed, including a public access golf course near Manila.

Manotoc said public access courses are key to the success of the sport.

“We are now recognizing that we must also take steps to support development of golf courses as well as developing new golfers,” Manotoc said. “Golfers need access to good golf courses.”

Conrado L. Benitez II, president and CEO of The Orchard Golf & Country Club and vice president for development of the Federation of Golf Clubs Philippines, is passionately engaged in growing the game of golf.

“Overall we are advancing in the quality of golf course operations and course playability,” he said. “Development has been slow, but this has allowed us time to develop well-educated and experienced Filipino management resources. Not long ago, expats were called upon as a significant resource of expertise, but now experienced Filipinos have increasingly assumed the key management roles at most golf courses.”

Benitez said the country has placed a high priority on training and continuing management education.

“Getting the golf courses more cooperative and organized together will be crucial to increasing golf course development as the Philippines economy strongly



Tommy Manotoc (left) and Conrad Benitez discuss the state of golf in the Philippines. The two leaders hope to increase public play in the growing market.

grows over the next decade,” Benitez said.

Manotoc has started a grass roots campaign to grow the game.

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