

Israelis plan Crete tourism investment with a casino

An Israeli business group intends to develop a tourism investment worth 500 million euros on a 2.5-square kilometer plot on the island of Crete, its representative has told the mayor of Hersonissos, Zacharias Doxastakis.

Part of the plot is located next to the site of a new road junction that will be created to serve the new municipal airport. Another part, which is privately owned, currently operates as the only 18-hole golf course on Crete. However, Doxastakis told Kathimerini that the group's representative said that the investment would only go ahead if the Greek state

speeds up its licensing procedures.

The investment program provides for the creation and operation of a five-star hotel unit comprising luxury tourism accommodation, a conference center, a spa, sports facilities, a shopping mall, a Cretan theme park and a casino.

The investors are asking the Finance Ministry to activate a law dating from 1994 which provides for the operation of a casino on Crete. Meanwhile, Cretan entrepreneurs as well as casino market sources say it would be best to have two casinos, one in the eastern part of Crete and another in the west.



TIE THE KNOT?

Not with this crisis!!!

Fewer Greeks are walking down the aisle as their country's deep economic crisis takes a toll on their famously lavish weddings, an age-old ritual that has become an unbearable cost for those struggling to make ends meet.

Religious wedding ceremonies in bell tower chapels overflowing with flowers, meter-high candles and candy wrapped in tulle, are a deeply ingrained tradition in Greece, where the powerful Orthodox Church plays an influential role in society.

But as recession slides into its sixth year, unemployment rises and poverty spreads, a church wedding is a luxury many couples can no longer afford.

The number of Greek couples who tied the knot in church tumbled to 28,000 in 2011, two years into Europe's debt crisis, compared to the pre-crisis level of 40,000 in 2008, according to the country's statistic service ELSTAT.

In contrast, the number of low-key civil unions skyrocketed to 26,000 in 2011 from about 8,000 a decade earlier.

As Greece's crisis deepens and successive governments are forced to impose wage cuts and tax rises in exchange for the foreign aid keeping the economy afloat, the wedding industry's countless shops and planners are also feeling the pinch.

The downturn has also had an unexpected effect on another ceremony revered by many Greeks - funerals. With more and more Greeks having trouble paying for funerals, municipal authorities in Athens have reduced the cost of burial in the capital's cemeteries. Some Greeks do not collect their dead loved ones from the hospital to avoid having to pay for the funeral. Others can no longer afford a traditional marble tombstone and so leave plots as simple dirt mounds overgrown by weeds, a cemetery official said.



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