



Holiday Inn



HOTEL CHECK – DUBAI, UAE

LAURA COLLACOTT

WHERE IS IT? Around the corner from the Mall of the Emirates in the residential district of Al Barsha, though it is pretty much face-on to Sheikh Zayed Road and the Metro. From the roof, the Madinat and Burj Al Arab are visible, while the respective Media and Internet Cities are just down the road. It's about a 25 minute drive to Dubai airport and 45 minutes to Abu Dhabi airport.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The owners have taken care to make sure that this is very much one of the new stock of budget hotel. Décor is tasteful and contemporary (I loved the kitsch black and gold glittered horse heads in the lobby), a raft of restaurants is at your disposal as are all the amenities you'd expect. The management quite accurately describe it as "the four-star hotel with a five-star look."

ROOM FACILITIES 310 rooms are available, divided into the categories of rooms, suites, and studios. All are spacious with all the standard hotel facilities – minibar, safe, refreshments, decent toiletries – and some non-standard ones – pillow menu, 15 minutes complimentary wifi and two large flatscreen TVs. The one-bedroom suite struggled to do the furniture justice,

purely on account of its size, and the door to the balcony was mysteriously locked, but the bed was comfortable, the room dark, quiet and cool and the shower hot and powerful; what more do you need for a good night's sleep?

Be sure to specify if you'd prefer a non-smoking room – I wasn't particular, but if you're sensitive to smoke the residual smell can be quite strong.

BUSINESS AND LEISURE FACILITIES

A late-night business centre is available on the top floor and it comes with a technical concierge to help if you're having a moment with your laptop. Seven light and airy conference and meeting rooms are also available up here with a number of layouts to suit different needs.

A fully equipped gym with professional instructor is at guests' disposal, as is a rooftop swimming pool (though you'll find it hard to do meaningful laps in it) and kids pool. The view from here is spectacular and the traffic noise not as bad as you might expect. Get up here early to bag one of the stylish sun loungers and bask for the day.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS Holiday Inn is serious about its food outlets – it has a whopping ten. For Arabic cuisine,

go for Xennyya where Middle Eastern and North African dishes are served up alongside tasty shisha digestifs. If you fancy an Asian dining experience, try Thai at the Royal Buddha or a sublime curry at Gharana. Here, you can enjoy cuisine from all regions of India accompanied by live music so good it could be a recording.

Watching your waistline? Sushi Folie, tucked in the corner of the lobby, is the place for a quick and healthy refuel. The all-day restaurant – The Gem Garden – serves international cuisine from daybreak to nightfall.

The Sand Bar is the most atmospheric place for civilised evening drinks and nibbles, though the Q sports bar is very popular with the local Barsha crowd.

PRICE \$218 for a standard room, subject to 10 per cent service charge and 10 per cent municipality fees. Room only.

VERDICT Exceptional value. It's clear to see why it was voted one of Dubai's leading business hotels within months of opening.

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