

Premier Inn, Dubai Investments Park

The welcome

It started out so well. Upon arrival, I was greeted by an extremely friendly receptionist who explained to me the opening times of the cafe, restaurant and bar in great detail and informed me there was a swimming pool and jacuzzi on the roof. However, when I tried to pay for my US\$95 (Dh350) room with my Visa Electron debit card, I was told I could only pay with cash or a credit card. I pointed out that I was able to reserve the room online with the debit card, but to no avail. The receptionist was very apologetic and quickly arranged for a taxi to take me to the nearby shopping centre to get some cash out at an ATM.

When I handed over a freshly withdrawn 500 dirham note, I was then confronted with the annoying problem that seems to plague UAE businesses when I was told "Do you have anything smaller? Not enough change." I didn't have anything smaller but I was given my room key and about 10 minutes later, the receptionist knocked on the door with the change.

The neighbourhood

The hotel is located at Dubai's Green Community, an expat-heavy gated enclave not far from Jebel Ali and reasonably close to Dubai Media City, Internet City and Knowledge Village on the other side of Sheikh Zayed Road. Apart from a few office buildings, a

small shopping centre and a leafy gated community where all the streets are named after flowers, there isn't much else there. The drive to the hotel traverses some dusty industrial areas with plenty of lorries but the hotel itself is in a quiet location away from the main roads. The Investments Park development is gathering pace and it was handy for me – I was attending a wedding at a villa in the gated community. For people visiting Dubai on business at the busy Jebel Ali Industrial zone, it's a well placed and affordable option.

The room

If you like purple, this is the room for you. The onslaught of purple starts in the foyer and continues along the corridors and into the rooms. Once inside, the white quilt has a strip of purple suedette embroidered with the Premier Inn logo across the foot of the bed, there's a purple padded vinyl headboard, a purple sofa and purple fluffy carpet. It's not a huge, palatial hotel room but at Dh350 per night, you can't really complain. There's a large flatscreen TV on the wall at the foot of the bed, spare pillows in the wardrobe and the room and bathroom are both spotlessly clean. Don't forget your own toiletries – this is not a hotel that you visit in order to snaffle the soap, shampoo and body lotion from the bathroom. Apart from a hairdryer, the only toiletries provided are foamy public bathroom

style hand soap next to the basin and a tightly wall-mounted bottle of Lux shampoo and body wash all-in-one.

The service

Debit card debacle aside, the staff are very pleasant and efficient at reception and in the food and beverage outlets. After I ascended to my room to glam up for the wedding, a taxi was ordered for me and it was waiting when I reappeared wearing a dress in the same shade of purple as the foyer walls, much to the staff's amusement. Just as you expect in a five-star hotel, the staff you pass as you walk through the corridors all offer a cheerful greeting as they go about cleaning rooms and restocking vending machines.

The food

Breakfast, which is an additional \$15 (Dh55), is buffet-style with the usual options of cereals, toast and hot food, such as eggs, bacon, sausages, foul medames, mushrooms, potatoes and tomatoes. There is also a 24-hour Costa Coffee in the foyer and Bedouin's Bistro and The Retreat offer some of Dubai's more affordable meals. The blackboard in the bistro lists good deals on curries and steak in addition to some tempting items like sesame coasted tuna loin.

The scene

For residents of the Green Community, this is as close as they get



US\$95 (Dh350) per night buys a double room with a large flatscreen TV and a spotlessly clean bathroom. Courtesy: Premier Inn

at the moment to having "a local" and the hotel hosts a pub quiz every Tuesday night. The Retreat closes at midnight so it's not likely to be a hub of raucous partying but then again, that's not really the raison d'être of a budget hotel aimed at business travellers and leisure travellers who just want a clean, comfy room at a good price. Likewise, the Premier Inn at Dubai's Silicon Oasis location sandwiched between the Al Ain Road and Emirates Road is going to attract more suits and sleepers than scene queens.

Loved

The price, the easy-to-find location with signposts dotted throughout the Green Community and the

friendly staff. Booking online was very easy too. They were very understanding when I nearly forgot to pay for my breakfast and with plans to open more hotels in Dubai this year and Abu Dhabi next year, I predict it will become a popular accommodation option in these recessionary times.

Hated

Not being able to pay with my Visa Electron debit card, even though I booked the room with the same piece of plastic. I have used this card in hotels in Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Morocco, Ireland, Mauritius, America and the UK so it was very annoying that they wouldn't take a Dubai bank debit card in a Dubai hotel.

The verdict

A clean, comfortable no-frills hotel that fills a much-needed niche in a city that is overstuffed with flashy five-star establishments. This is just one of dozens of new budget hotels opening in Dubai. Hopefully they will all be as convenient as this one – and they will take debit cards.

The bottom line

A double room at the Premier Inn costs from \$95 (Dh350) per night, including taxes.

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★ Georgia Lewis