

São Paulo the megalopolis

São Paulo is the New York of the Latin world, a megalopolis with the most sophisticated and cosmopolitan life in South America. It is one of the world's largest and most populous cities, and a major cultural and economic center.

As an ugly concrete jungle, it makes up for the lack of aesthetic beauty with top-rate restaurants, nightlife, shopping, and high-end galleries. Yes, it's too noisy, too crowded, too fast-paced, and no one visits the city with sightseeing in mind, but you'll find the ultimate urban experience, where fashion, art, and design are flourishing.

The city buzzes with new talent and ideas, with chefs innovating the city's Italian, Portuguese, and Japanese cuisines, and young designers opening experimental clothing boutiques. They're all mostly found in the Jardins, Vila Madalena, and Higienópolis neighborhoods, where hipsters flock to the coolest shops and bars. Stay in one of these districts and the best of the city is within easy reach.

Devote yourself to urban pursuits like the paulistanos do, and you'll find the beauty of this ugly duckling.

Top 10 sights and attractions

1. Latin America's best collection of European art in MASP – São Paulo Museum of Art.
2. Shopping down RUA OSCAR FREIRE and a night out around the Jardins district.
3. The contemporary art exhibits in Instituto Tomie Ohtake.
4. Two centuries of Brazilian art in the Pinacoteca do Estado.
5. The interesting interactive Estação da Luz – Portuguese Language Museum.
6. The landmark COPAN BUILDING.
7. Oscar Niemeyer's AUDITÓRIO IBIRAPUERA, a concert hall in Parque do Ibirapuera.
8. EDIFÍCIO ITALIA's observation deck.
9. The huge SÃO PAULO CATHEDRAL.
10. The Empire State Building-inspired ALTINO ARANTES BUILDING.

Where to stay

Look for the hotel or hostel that best matches your budget, type of trip or personality. Here you can guarantee a room but you do NOT pay anything at the time of booking. Payments are only made at the hotel and there are no booking fees. Most hotels allow cancellations with no penalty if done up to 24 or 48 hours in advance. You'll see that information at the time of booking and again in the confirmation email.

Eating and Drinking

With so many world-class restaurants, São Paulo is a city which you can't leave without experiencing the several gastronomic highlights. Whether you choose a popular churrascaria or the latest trendy spot, you'll have a memorable meal. This is Latin America's hottest food city, with cuisines from all over the world. The best restaurants are found in the Jardins district.

Shopping

Although Buenos Aires is rising to the top, São Paulo still is the best shopping city in Latin America. The sophisticated Paulistas look for upmarket shops in their Jardins neighborhood, with its Rua Oscar Freire being the equivalent of Fifth Avenue or Rodeo Drive. Another street nearby, Rua Augusta, is also home to a number of interesting shops, as is much of Jardins. That's where you'll find Brazil's top designers together with international labels, something the more glamorous locals are increasingly looking for, as shown during the city's fashion week that is now one of the world's major fashion shows.

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