

*Manioc, the root of Brazil (various preparations with manioc) at Michelin-starred D.O.M.
Credit: Ricardo D'Angelo*



SAO PAULO



When in São Paulo, Live Like a Paulistano

BY JAMIE DITARANTO

Brazilian model and actress **Thaila Ayala**
Credit: Getty



Brazilians may mean business in São Paulo, but that doesn't mean they don't know how to have fun. Here's how to embrace the best of Brazilian culture in this massive metropolis.

São Paulo is a city of staggering size. Sprawling outward and upward with crisscrossing freeways and towering high-rises, it is home to an astounding 12 million people and is the largest city in the Western Hemisphere.

Settled by the Portuguese in the 16th century and expanded by the coffee barons of the 19th, São

Paulo today is where business in Brazil gets done. It's also historically been the country's entry point for immigrants seeking new opportunities, making the mega-metropolis a true melting pot, with strong Italian, Japanese, and Arabic influences.

São Paulo is also a sample platter for everything Brazil has to offer from its astoundingly diverse culture, boundary-pushing dining and art, to treasured traditions of samba, soccer, and coffee. While you may never become a true "Paulistano" — a moniker locals wear with pride — discovering these quintessential Brazilian experiences will get you feeling as if you were.

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EAT AND DRINK LIKE A PAULISTANO

In Brazil, coffee is so popular that Brazilians changed the Portuguese word for breakfast to *café da manhã*, which literally translates as “morning coffee.” Brazilian coffee is typically strong, sweet, and served in small cups. It’s also built into the DNA of São Paulo. Seek your morning *cafézinho* at long-running shops like **Cafe Floresta** in the Centro Histórico district or embrace your inner coffee snob in Pinheiros district at **Coffee Lab**, where the expansive menu educates patrons on the many varieties of coffee grown around Brazil.

Although the city has no shortage of pizza, sushi, or kibbeh from its immigrant communities, Brazil’s gastronomical revolution is all about embracing indigenous ingredients. Thanks to Michelin-starred restaurants like Alex Atala’s **D.O.M.** and Helena Rizzo’s **Mani** — both in the upscale Jardins neighborhood — leading the way, a trip to São Paulo is an opportunity to taste the esoteric flavors of the Amazon like *jambu*, an herb known for its tongue-tingling effect.

While it’s an exciting time for Brazil’s culinary arts, you’ll still find most Paulistanos sticking to the traditional cuisine and its protein-rich cornerstones of meat, beans, and root vegetables. Not to be missed is Brazil’s national dish — *feijoada*. This meaty bean stew takes hours of preparation and therefore, most restaurants serve it once a week; Wednesday is the most typical day. However, at **Bolinhas**, which serves some of the most famous *feijoada* in the city, the dish is served whenever the restaurant is open.

You’ll also want to try a classic *churrascaria* like **Barbacoa** in the glitzy Itaim Bibi district, where Brazil’s famous *rodízio*-style barbecue is served by waiters carrying slabs of meat on long sword-like skewers. If you’re not into meat, but love the idea of Brazilian *rodízio*, you can enjoy a similar experience at **Bacio del Nonno** in the Vila Olímpia neighborhood. This pizzeria offers over 70 sweet and savory pizzas, which are served straight out of the oven and onto the floor. All you have to do is point to the piece that sparks your fancy.

SHOP LIKE A PAULISTANO

In São Paulo, eager shoppers will find so much more to indulge in than bikinis and flip flops. The city has plenty to offer fashion-lovers from the big-name designers on

Oscar Freire Street in Jardins to the boutiques of Brazilian-born designers like **João Pimenta** and **Fernanda Yamamoto** in Pinheiros. While there, also stop by **Insecta**, a shoe brand that up-cycles vintage clothing to create stylish and colorful shoes that are a hundred percent sustainable.

To find the best deals in the city, make a trip to **Rua 25 de Março**, or March 25th Street, in Centro. (The unusual name commemorates the signing of the Brazilian constitution.) There is plenty of activity on this hilly street, which is lined with shops selling apparel, crafts, home goods, electronics, and just about everything else you can think of, at discount prices. It’s the perfect place to pull together a last-minute outfit or to stock up on souvenirs for friends back home.

If you find yourself in São Paulo over the weekend, make a point to visit the Saturday market at **Praça Benedito Calixto** in Pinheiros. At this weekly flea market, and local favorite, you never know what treasures you might find in the jumble of jewelry, crafts, leather goods, and antiques.

PLAY LIKE A PAULISTANO

When it comes to Brazil’s love of football (aka soccer), the enthusiasm you see at the World Cup is just the tip of the iceberg. And in a city as large as São Paulo, one team is not enough. If you’d like to catch a local game, choose one of the city’s three rival clubs: Corinthians, Palmeiras, and São Paulo FC. If you’re a fervent soccer fan yourself, make sure to pay a visit to the **Museum of Football**, which is housed in the city’s oldest and still-working stadium, Pacaembu.

If football fervor overtakes you, and you’d like to apply your own foot to the ball, head to one of the city’s many green spaces to join a pick-up match. Start at **Ibirapuera Park**, the largest park in the city and “lungs of São Paulo.” Here, Paulistanos of all stripes enjoy its endless options, including running trails, bike rentals, volleyball pitches, skate parks, green lawns, and more.

EMBRACE HERITAGE LIKE A PAULISTANO

Ibirapuera Park is also a fantastic place to discover Brazilian heritage at numerous museums, like the **Museum of Modern Art** and the **Afro Brazil Museum**, which documents Brazil’s long history of slavery and its

descendants. Take a short walk from the park to **Avenida Paulista** (Paulista Avenue) to visit the **São Paulo Museum of Art**, locally called MASP and home to one of the largest collections of European art in the Southern Hemisphere. Add yet more fun to the trip on Sundays, when the avenue opens to pedestrians only.

A few treasured monuments are also worth the hike, like the **Monument to the Bandeiras**, a large-scale granite sculpture by the Italian-Brazilian sculptor Victor Brecheret that commemorates the expeditioners who ventured into the Brazilian interior. The **Monument to the Independence of Brazil**, at the north tip of in Parque da Independência, marks the spot where the King Dom Pedro I declared Brazil’s independence from Portugal in 1822.

Other landmarks of São Paulo’s heritage can be found throughout the city, such as the neo-gothic **Se Cathedral**, located in the city center. For something more colorful, step inside the **Nossa Senhora do Brasil**. This modern cathedral pays tribute to Brazil’s heritage with hand-painted Portuguese tiles and a frescoed ceiling that depicts the biological and cultural diversity of Brazil.

CREATE LIKE A PAULISTANO

To see contemporary art in São Paulo, one only needs to go for a walk. The city has become one of the world’s premiere destinations for street art and launched some of the most famous names in the world, including Kobra, Nina Pandolfo, and Cranio — all of whose work can be enjoyed throughout the city.

In the bohemian neighborhood of **Vila Madalena**, walk through **Batman Alley**, whose colorful murals have become so popular the city officially closed the street off to cars to give pedestrians the freedom to linger and pose for photos. New art alleys like **Aprendiz Alley** are also establishing themselves as major points of interest.

Although Vila Madalena is at the heart of São Paulo’s street art scene, it’s by no means the only hotspot. In **Liberdade**, find murals that reflect the culture of the neighborhood’s Japanese population, while in **Cambuci**, you can track down the original works of **Osgemeos**, a local team of twins, whose larger-than-life murals have gained global fame and pop up from Milan to Mumbai.





Batman's Alley
 Credit: Elias Rovielo



Yanomami mushroom salad at D.O.M
 Credit: Ricardo D'Angelo

SWING LIKE A PAULISTANO

As you might suspect, São Paulo is a work-hard, play-hard kind of town, so it's no surprise to find some of the best nightlife in all of South America here. From electric dance clubs to hipster cocktail bars — and everything in between — there's a perfect night out in São Paulo for everyone. The best way to find yours is to simply follow the music.

Live music, no matter the genre, is always preferred in Brazil. For Bossa Nova, lounge in a sultry jazz club like **Madeleine Jazz Bar** in Vila Madalena or **Baretto** at the Hotel Fasano in Jardins. For samba, practice your footwork at **Bar Mangueira** in Pinheiros or **Bar Camará** in Vila Madalena. And if you're looking for the kind of party that doesn't really get started until well past midnight, nightclubs like **D.EDGE** in Barra Funda and **Love Story** in Centro are for you.

Whichever you choose, make sure to begin the night with dinner and a drink at a traditional and ultra-casual *boteco* bar. You'll know one when you see it — just look for the plastic chairs and tables marked with beer logos. For a nightcap, or a warm-up drink before the clubs, the **Skye Bar** at Hotel Unique in Jardins has a great rooftop with panoramic views of São Paulo's boundless skyline.

GETTING THERE

United Airlines offers nonstop service from Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD) to São Paulo International Airport (GRU). Flights take approximately 9 hours and 50 minutes one way.



FCP Frutas
Grocery Shopping in São Paulo
 Credit: R.M. Nunes