

48 HOURS

SÃO PAULO

Ella Buchan
spends a weekend
in Brazil's
biggest city

Think of Rio de Janeiro and a flurry of vividly coloured feathers might flash through your mind. São Paulo, a huge 95,800sq mile metropolis and home to more than 20% of Brazil's population, is much harder to pin down.

But a little time digging beneath its steely, skyscraper-dominated exterior can unearth gems that sparkle just as prettily as its party-loving cousin, making it well worth a stopover for those visiting Rio during the Olympic Games in August.

It's been nicknamed the 'Brazilian Big Apple' and, just like New York, has world-class restaurants, a true 24-hour

culture and a frenetic pace.

Thankfully Sampa, as locals know it, also has some charming, bite-sized barrios or neighbourhoods that make a trip there much easier to digest.

Two of the prettiest, most charming and safest barrios are boho-paradise Vila Madalena in western São Paulo and leafy, well-heeled Jardins to the south. Both make lovely bases for exploring the museums, architecture and nightlife of central São Paulo, easily accessible on the metro system.

British Airways and Tam Airlines both fly direct to São Paulo from London, with the latter connecting the city

to other Brazilian highlights including Salvador on the pretty Bahia coast and, of course, Rio.

DAY ONE

09:00: Get an early start to beat the crowds to the observation deck at Altino Arantes or Banespa (24 Rua João Brícola), modelled on the Empire State Building, next to São Bento metro station in Centro. Entry is free and the 161-metre lift to the top rewards with head-spinning views.

10:00: Around 10 minutes west, off Viaduto do Cha, is Ramos de Azevedo. Named after a lauded Brazilian architect who designed the Municipal Theatre, this public

square is dotted with palm trees and sculptures.

10:30: Grab some sustenance on the go at tiny cafe Crispiniano on Rua 7 de Abril, which serves pastries and paninis next to the square.

11:15: Continue up the same road and turn right to hit Praça da Republica, the meeting point for a three-hour walking tour. These free introductions to the historical old downtown run three days a week, taking in Sampa's art deco buildings, City Hall, Municipal Theatre

and 16th-century churches. saopaulofreewalkingtour.com

15:00: Catch the metro at Republica to Vila Madalena. Refuel at Coffee Lab (1340 Rua Fradique Coutinho), a 15-minute stroll from the station. This hip cafe is more like a lab where baristas study different methods of roasting, brewing and pouring coffee. Order one of the 'rituals', where coffee is paired with cheese or chocolate (£5). coffeelab.com.br

16:00: This leafy area is great for souvenir

shopping. From Coffee Lab, walk a few minutes southwest down Rua Wisard and take a left for Rua Luis Anhaia to Calu Fontes, where you'll find ceramics emboldened with exotic blooms and illustrations of Frida Kahlo. Then walk another five minutes to Rua Fidalga, where Via Vila has outdoor furniture, antiques, crafts and modern curiosities such as shot glasses sculpted into perky bikini bums. calufontes.com viavila.com.br

17:30: At the southern end of the next street, Rua Harmonia is one of the world's most impressive and concentrated monuments

to street art - Beco do Batman, or Batman Alley. You can't miss it - a huge drawing of the caped crusader points down to the cobbled lane, where walls are covered with eye-popping, regularly updated motifs.

19:00: Walk 15 minutes back up Rua Girassol for a fresh, innovative twist on traditional Brazilian food from one of the city's culinary stars, Chef Vivi. She earned her chef's whites at São Paulo's D.O.M., regularly named one of the world's best eateries, and now serves dishes such as squid, grilled mango and sautéed radishes. chefvivi.com.br

➔ **21:00:** Ten minutes down the same road is Grazie a Dio! This buzzing local spot regularly hosts local musicians playing 'samba rock' – a hip-shaking mix of samba, bebop, jazz and soul. Head north and turn left on Rua Aspicuelta and left again up Rua Harmonia, where Alto da Harmonia has £4 starfruit caipirinhas and views over the city. There's even a telescope for close-ups.

0:00: Night owls can jump into a cab for a 10-minute ride to sexy Bar Secreto, an exclusive cocktail lounge and dance spot that has attracted the likes of Bono and Madonna with its candlelit alcoves, live bands and DJs playing house music until 5am. Email ahead for a spot on the

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With brands including Armani and Louis Vuitton, Rua Oscar Freire is São Paulo's Madison Avenue

guest list and expect to pay up to £10 a cocktail.
barsecreto.com.br

DAY TWO

10:00: Escape the city heat with a morning at the seaside. An hour from the city, pretty port town Santos has four miles of vanilla sands fringed by manicured gardens. Eight buses a day

depart the international airport, or Viator has a day trip from £260, including transport and a ferry trip to Santo Amaro Island.
viator.com

11:00: Stroll along the main boulevard, decorated in a coffee bean pattern, which is a nod to the fact the Port of Santos was once the most important in Brazil due to its thriving coffee exportation. From there, walk five minutes inland to the Museu do Cafe (Rua XV de Novembro, £1 entry), dedicated to the history of the dark stuff. Finish with an affogato – espresso, vanilla ice cream and chocolate sauce served with a cinnamon stick.
museudocafe.org.br

12:30: For lunch, Gotisso (Avenida

Almirante Saldanha da Gama) serves zingy sushi steps from the beach, from £1.50 a piece.
gotisso.com.br

15:00: Back in the city, Head to the Jardins district for window shopping along one of the world's richest shopping streets. With brands including Armani and Louis Vuitton, Rua Oscar Freire is São Paulo's equivalent of Madison Avenue in New York City. Hot-pink boutique Anunciacao has a white fish pond in the window and quality separates on the racks, while Cia Maritima is home to bold fabrics and quirky brightly-coloured bikinis. There's a huge Havaianas store too, where you can stock up on flip-flops for a fifth of the price in the UK. ➔

11:15: Monastery of Sao Bento



17:30: Batman Alley



11:15: Municipal Theatre



10:00: Santos



11:00: Museu do Cafe



16:00:
São
Paulo
Museum
of Art

→ **16:00:** Walk 15 minutes northeast to hit Paulista Avenue, a two-mile thoroughfare and one of the most important stretches in the city, lined with financial headquarters. It's also home to the São Paulo Museum of Art (entry £5), where the collection includes works by Monet and Picasso. masp.art.br

17:00: Across the street, Parque Trianon is an oasis in the middle of the financial district. This breath of green air is the last slice of the rainforest, which once covered the land here.

18:30: After freshening up, head to one of Jardins' best bars. The View (Alameda Santos) serves up some of São Paulo's most dazzling vistas – and a mean Kir Royal for a bargain £3.50. theviewbar.com.br

20:00: You can't beat the mind-blowing, four-course tasting menu at D.O.M. (about £70). Chef Alex Atala's dishes are designed to showcase Brazilian ingredients including white corn, Amazonian herb jambu, and heart of palm.

domrestaurante.com.br 



15:00 Parque Trianon

Where to stay



SAVE

Guest Urban

This funky little hotel feels fresh and modern with parquet floors, exposed brick and huge canvases decorating the walls in the reception area. The rooms are just as stylish, decorated

in white and grey hues with pops of colour. Free bikes make it easy to explore boho Vila Madalena to the north and posh Jardins to the south. Doubles from £40 per night.

guesturbansp.com.br



SPEND

Melia Jardim Europa

In the Itaim business district, this pretty hotel has sleekly designed rooms with pillow menus, local art and views across the rooftops from those with terraces.

The wellness pool offers a

sanctuary from the busy streets, while the 'Green Floor' allows guests to choose a sustainable room with recycled stationery, natural toiletries and live plants. Doubles from £100 per night. melia.com



SPLURGE

Hotel Unique

Shaped like a giant slice of watermelon, the decor in this fashion-forward member of Design Hotels is just as refreshing, so is a dip in the crimson rooftop pool and sipping on a grape martini

while watching the sunset over the city. Doubles, with Bvlgari toiletries and Havaianas flip-flops, start at £226 per night. hotelunique.com.br



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