

SÃO PAULO

As Virgin Atlantic makes its first foray into Latin America next month, with a daily flight to Brazil's largest city, **Tamara Hinson** finds out what's worth seeing



BROOKLIN NOVO

WHY GO?

Brooklin Novo might not be on the itinerary of the average tourist, but this is where many business travellers base themselves. It's got some of the city's top hotels, including the Four Seasons São Paulo, which opened in late 2018 on the banks of the Pinheiros River. It's one of the city's financial areas, home to the United Nations Business Center, the World Trade Center São Paulo and various company headquarters. A post-1980s period of gentrification gave the neighbourhood a wider appeal, and it now features several huge shopping centres and nightclubs, as well as the Octávio Frias de Oliveira bridge, one of the city's most recognisable symbols.

WHAT TO DO

Although Brooklin Novo is, for many, merely a base, there's plenty to keep visitors entertained. For retail therapy, there's Shopping Nações Unidas and the Morumbi Shopping Center, both enormous, high-end malls. Most of Brooklin Novo's best restaurants and bars are in hotels, although the neighbourhoods of Vila Olímpia, Itaim Bibi, Moema and Vila Nova Conceição also have some great nightlife options, and are all less than three miles away.

PAULISTA AVENUE

WHY GO?

Paulista is São Paulo's most significant avenue – a one-and-a-half-mile boulevard in the heart of the city that runs through several neighbourhoods, including Bela Vista, Cerqueira César, Consolação, Paraíso and Jardim Paulista. Lining it (and filling its side streets) are some of the city's biggest hotels, shopping centres and museums, including the InterContinental São Paulo, Shopping Cidade São Paulo and São Paulo Museum of Art (otherwise known as MASP). Walking its length is a great way to get a feel for the city.

WHAT TO DO

If you're a cyclist, there's a fantastically smooth two-way bicycle path down the centre of the avenue, between the two lanes of traffic. As well as MASP, Paulista Avenue's tourist draws include the Japan House cultural centre and Trianon Park. On Sundays, the entire avenue is closed to traffic, and thousands of cyclists, walkers and roller skaters take to the tarmac.



DESTINATIONS

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WHERE TO
stay

SAVE

Holiday Inn São Paulo Parque Anhembi

This three-star hotel is a convenient, budget option next to Campo de Marte Airport and the convention centre. From £50 a night. ihg.com

SPEND

InterContinental São Paulo

The InterContinental is just a few metres from Paulista Avenue, and the bar's caipirinhas are the best in town. From £89 a night. ihg.com

SPLURGE

Four Seasons Hotel São Paulo

This beautiful five-star hotel has a huge spa and fabulous restaurant serving Brazilian-Italian cuisine. From £228 a night. fourseasons.com

fast fact

Virgin Atlantic starts direct daily flights on a Boeing 787-9 from Heathrow on March 29, with fares from £660. There's a trade competition to win a spot on the first flight at vsflyinghub.com/saopauloinaugural



LIBERDADE

WHY GO?

This historic neighbourhood, with its zen gardens and lantern-like street lights, is where you'll find the world's largest Japantown, founded in the early 1900s. The abolishment of slavery in Brazil coincided with the end of Japan's feudal system, which left many Japanese farmers destitute, so

the two governments signed a treaty permitting Japanese migration to Brazil to work on the coffee plantations surrounding São Paulo.

WHAT TO DO

Wander along Rua Galvão Bueno, passing under its huge red Torii gate, and explore the pretty side streets,

filled with Japanese restaurants, manga bookstores and izakayas (pubs), many with traditional noren door curtains. Liberdade's Museum of Japanese Immigration provides a fascinating insight into the neighbourhood, and if you're there on a weekend, visit the market in Praça da Liberdade for Japanese street food and the chance to buy a kimono-clad wooden doll.

HIGIENÓPOLIS

WHY GO?

Just a short walk from Paulista Avenue, Higienópolis is a breath of fresh air – a chic, park-filled neighbourhood bursting with boutique hotels, fantastic restaurants and independent shops specialising in everything from homewares to Brazilian sweets. It's a joy to wander around, with colourful street art, restored heritage buildings and quaint cafes.

WHAT TO DO

Come here for the wonderful mix of architecture, ranging from beautiful pastel villas that once belonged to the Portuguese owners of Brazilian coffee plantations, to modernist icons such as the Bretagne Building, designed by João Artacho Jurado and ranked one of the best places to live in the world by *Wallpaper* magazine. There are some superb restaurants, including Taquería La Sabrosa with its Day of the Dead-themed decor, while the Tryp Hotel or Hotel Belas Artes are great options for those basing themselves in the neighbourhood.



VILA MADALENA

WHY GO?

A short distance from the city centre (but still walkable), Vila Madalena is São Paulo's creative district – a park-dotted, colourful neighbourhood packed with independent cafes, boutiques and restaurants. At its heart is Beco do Batman (Batman Alley), whose street art attracts Instagrammers from all over the world.

WHAT TO DO

Vila Madalena's highlights are in the streets fanning out from Beco do Batman. Get an art fix at A Casa: Museum of the Brazilian Object, which showcases the best of Brazilian design, or splash some cash on gorgeous stationery at O Velho Livreiro.

PICTURES: Embratur; Shutterstock