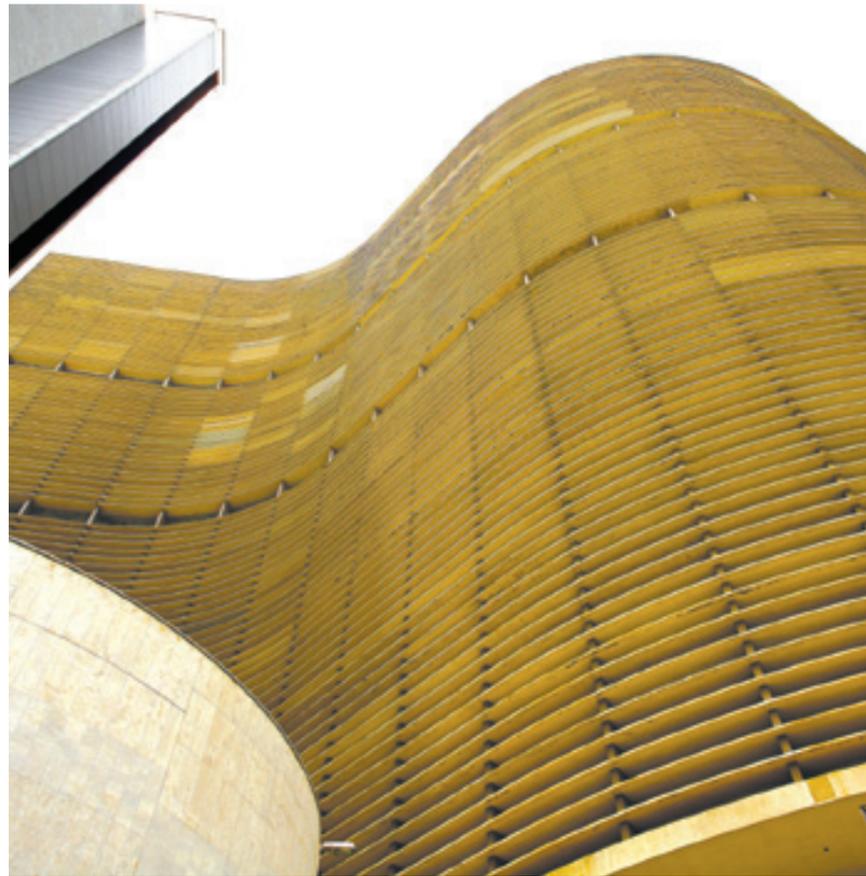


# THE PLEASURE OF BUSINESS

BY KEVIN RAUB | PHOTOS BY TUCA REINES

São Paulo, Brazil, may primarily be known as the business epicenter of South America. But the sights, sounds, tastes, and epic vistas of this sprawling megalopolis make the city unlike any other destination in the world.



Look between the frantic concrete lines of this urban workhouse, and you'll discover **treasures hidden** in plain sight.

**SPEND EVEN A SHORT TIME** in São Paulo, and it will readily become apparent that the city has no shortage of superlative vantage points. But few sights in this South American business capital jar a first-time visitor like the chic outdoor Skye Bar lounge on the roof of Hotel Unique, the rock-star bed of choice in the biggest city in the Southern Hemisphere. There's no vertigo involved—the hotel has fewer than 10 floors—but its position overlooking the city's most lush neighborhood, Jardim Paulista, serves as a sort of megalopolitan frame to an endless line of concrete and steel that stretches across the horizon without end. Few descriptors do justice to this enormity (“freaking huge” comes close). The experience is more startling when you consider that few travelers are even aware that such a sight exists.

Depending on who's counting, São Paulo is either the third or the seventh largest city in the world, with a metropolitan population of more than 20 million and a surface area of 780 square miles, dwarfing both New York and Los Angeles. It is home to the largest helicopter fleet in the world, the largest public transportation system in the world, and the largest number of billionaires in Latin America. But while São Paulo has never struggled to convince anyone that it's a great place to do business, the city can't seem to shake the image that it's too intimidating a place in which to have fun once the meetings are over.

Granted, São Paulo is almost violent in its brusqueness. It lacks a defined urban plan, relying instead on a dense fabric of intersecting neighborhoods. In general, it's not considered pretty, but look between the frantic concrete lines of this urban workhouse, and you'll discover treasures hidden in plain sight: the retro rooftop of the Itaú bank at Praça Panamericana; the S-shaped wave of Oscar Niemeyer's downtown Copan

building, the largest reinforced-concrete structure in the country and an icon of Fifties modernism; and the poetic (some might say reckless) manner in which endless zip lines of *motoboy*s weave through intersections, between cars stopped dead in traffic, and over sidewalks at rush hour (in São Paulo, it's always rush hour). You find the charm in the madness.

But no matter how you swing it, São Paulo is at heart a place to work, a precedent set when waves of immigrant job hunters from Europe, Japan, and Lebanon descended on the city at the turn of the 19th century. But this is no Frankfurt—when the sun sets, São Paulo holds its own against any locale. Bankers, chefs, and fashion designers have long known this, of course, finance, gastronomy, and fashion being long-endemic industries. But São Paulo is also Latin America's edgiest arts and culture city (sorry, Mexico City and Buenos Aires). Sampa, as it's affectionately known by locals, is a fierce collage of culture and conundrum, with a heart scrapped together by grit and gold.

Santo Grão Café sits on the tail end of one of the most luxurious streets in the world, Rua Oscar Freire—Brazil's

(left to right) Oscar Niemeyer's Copan Building, Mercado Municipal, and Avenida Paulista; (opening spread) the famed Ponte Estaiada lit up at nighttime

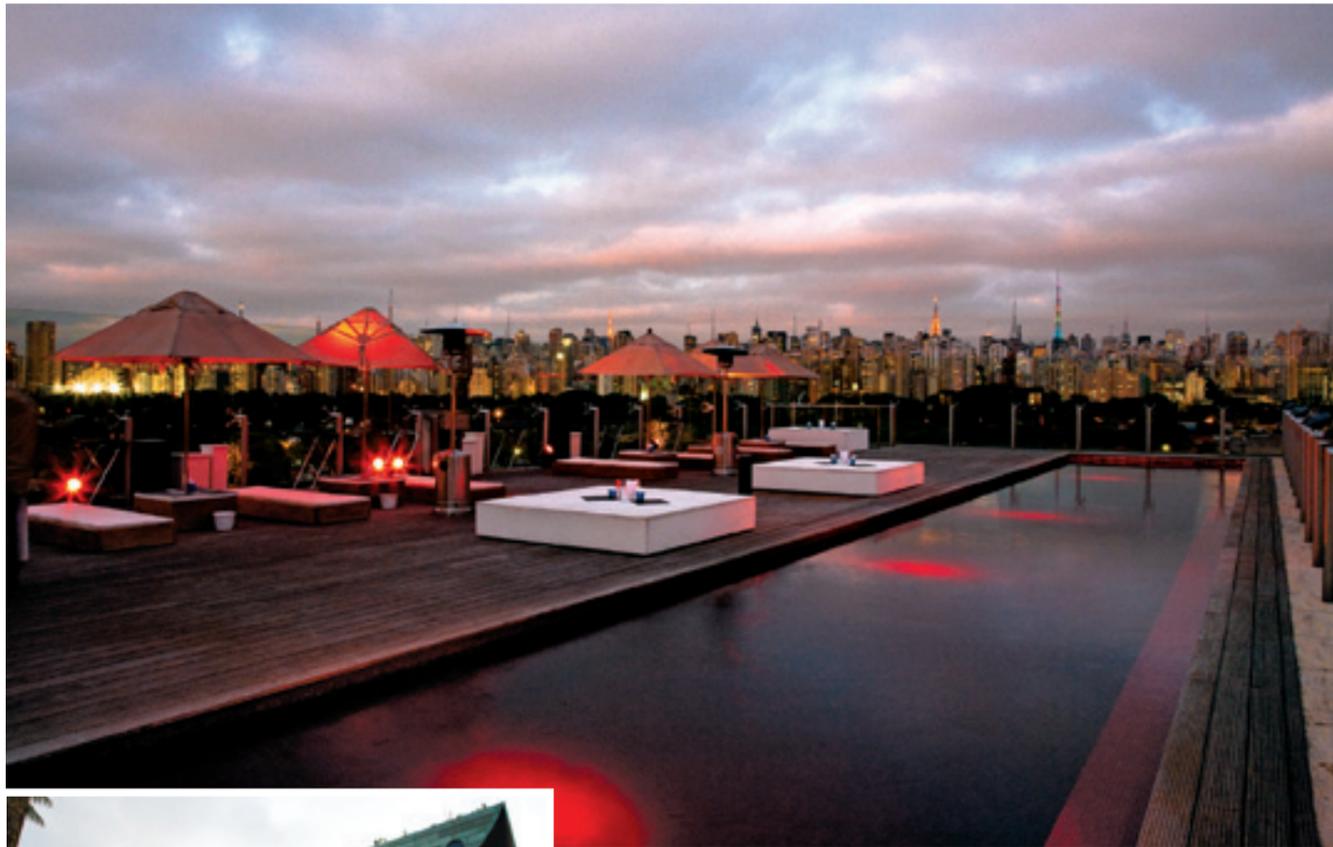
## GETTING AROUND

- Hotel Unique, Av. Brigadeiro Luis Antonio 4700, Jardim Paulista, 55 11 3055 4710**
- Santo Grão Café, Rua Oscar Freire 413, Jardins, 55 11 3082 9969**
- Hotel Emiliano, Rua Oscar Freire 384, Jardins, 55 11 3069 4369**
- Paulo Museum of Art (MASP), Av. Paulista 1578, 55 11 3251 5644**
- L'Entrecôte de Ma Tante, Rua Dr. Mario Ferraz 17, Jardim Europa, 55 11 3034 5324**
- D.O.M., Rua Barão de Capanema 549, Cerqueira César, 55 11 3088 0761**
- Kinoshita, Rua Jacques Félix 405, Vila Nova Conceição, 55 11 3849 6940**
- SubAstor, Rua Delfina, 163, Vila Madalena, 55 11 3815 1364**
- Ó do Borogodó, Rua Horácio Lane 21, Pinheiros, 55 11 3814 4087**
- Mercado Municipal, Rua da Cantareira 306, Centro, 55 11 3223 3022**
- Pinacoteca do Estado, Praça da Luz Centro, 55 11 3324 1000**
- Teatro Municipal, Praça Ramos de Azevedo, Centro, 55 11 3222 8698**

Rodeo Drive. It's this city's best cup of joe, offering rarely seen blends that sometimes even have “organic” and “Kenya” in their names (Brazil doesn't import much coffee, as one might imagine, and “eco” anything is still in its infancy). For breakfast, Santo Grão Café is a must, not only for the wake-up call but also for the eye candy—a who's who of beautiful specimens from Jardim Paulista flock in and out like songbirds hell-bent on securing a modeling contract. It's a perfect spot to begin a stroll along the best street-level evidence of Brazil's much-belabored economic buzz, and easily reached from Hotel Emiliano, the city's first, and still best, boutique hotel.

Though São Paulo isn't exactly known as a walking-friendly city, tree-lined Rua Oscar Freire is an exception to this belief and an 11-block testament to Brazil's monetary might. Louis Vuitton, Ermenegildo Zegna, Versace, and Marc Jacobs all pay rent here, but the area is just as notable for homegrown designers like Forum, Iódice, Ellus, and the flagship Havaianas store, an architectural beach-blanket babylon of color and concrete that is hardly appropriate for a flip-flop shop—but it works.

A few blocks northeast is where all that Brazil Boom cash is siphoned—Avenida Paulista, the resolute fiscal heart of the world's eighth-largest economy. The 1.7-mile thoroughfare is lined with towering headquarters of some of the world's largest financial institutions. As seen from the observation deck of the Edifício Itália, São Paulo's second-tallest building, the avenue appears the color of crushed seashells, seemingly blended together into concrete soldiers standing sentinel across the horizon. Taken in at street level, it becomes more apparent that Paulista packs a cultural wallop as well. The most comprehensive fine-arts museum in the Southern Hemisphere, São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP) sits on a pair of lateral stilts above a basketball court-sized abyss of freestanding space, a design coup realized by Italian-born, Brazilian-natural-



Tante, run by French-born celebrity TV chef Olivier Anquier. One might expect a superstar like him to open an elaborate five-star restaurant with a fussy menu of groundbreaking dishes and stuffy menu descriptions. Not Anquier. The restaurant's name, "My Aunt's Entrecôte," is as simple as the menu. There is but one dish. Take a guess.

But what Anquier's bistro lacks in Laguiole-level sophistication, it more than makes up for in intrigue and simplicity. The entrecôte recipe of the chef's aunt, highlighted by her secret gravy, has been handed down over several generations and is fiercely guarded under lock and no fewer than seven keys. The dish is served alongside endless traditional bistro-style fries—Brazil's best, hands-down. The trendy space is co-owned by a team of well-established *fashionistas* and architects. It's the perfect spot for a quick and stylish lunch.

This is probably as good a time as any to address the food issue. Anyone in the know—namely chefs across Europe and next door in Buenos Aires—will tell you that São Paulo is a gastronomic mecca, where food is never on anyone's list of complaints. Yet the general public rarely holds the city in the same gastronomic regard as say, Paris, New York, or even Mexico City. It's a gross oversight on the part of the culinary jet set, as São Paulo holds its foodie chops against any city in the world.

Why are restaurants in Sampa so spectacular? There are historical reasons, like the aforementioned flood of immigration that brought a wealth of recipes and traditions to the country (São Paulo boasts unverifiable claims as home to the highest populations of Italians, Japanese, and Lebanese outside of Italy, Japan, and Lebanon). But mostly, it's attributable to a recklessness that pervades all walks of Brazilian culture: somewhat unlike their European counterparts, Brazilian chefs don't pay any respect to predetermined rules in the kitchen.

(top) The Skye Bar at Hotel Unique, with a view of the Jardim Paulista; São Paulo Museum of Art; (opposite, from top) D.O.M.'s kitchen and dining room; a room at the Hotel Emilliano



## GUITARRA TOWN

Sampa's luthiery tradition is Brazilian to the core.

**B**OSSA NOVA IS CERTAINLY Brazil's best-known musical export, but within its borders there are thriving scenes across a variety of unexpected genres. Pop/rock (Jota Quest), rock (Forfun and Pitty), emocore (Fresno and NXZero), melodic hardcore (CPM22), and alternative/indie rock (Autoramas and Black Drawing Chalks) acts dot the landscape, and there are more punk bands than a teenage anarchist can shake his shtick at. One thing these folks have in common is that they all need guitars. Enter Giannini ([giannini.com.br](http://giannini.com.br)) and Tagima ([tagima.com.br](http://tagima.com.br)).

In 1900, Italian immigrant Tranquillo Giannini began building acoustic guitars by hand at his workshop in downtown São Paulo. The shop was located on Rua São João (now Av. São João), a street with a rich musical history recalled in places like Bar Brahma (Av. São João 677, Centro; 55 11 3333 0855), the city's oldest drinking establishment and a wonderful spot to take in samba and *Música Popular Brasileira*.

Though today, around the world, the name Giannini is synonymous with the delicate stringed nuances of samba and bossa nova, the company's guitars "carry the 'Brazilian soul' in their DNA," says Flavio Giannini, grandnephew of Tranquillo. "Brazil is a country of continental dimensions. There are various accents, languages, and realities within the same country. Therefore, Brazilians have a very large melting pot, which gives us a way of feeling music, and thus to build instruments. Brazilian guitars reflect this mixture of styles, being born with a versatile tone, with plenty of personality."

Tagima got off the ground in the early Eighties when Seizi Tagima quit his managerial job with petroleum giant Esso and began crafting tailor-made guitars by pure osmosis. Now one of the most famous luthiers in Brazil, he later sold the rights to Tagima and today operates Seizi Tagima (Rua Teodoro Sampaio 888, Pinheiros; 55 11 3082 2814), a custom shop in São Paulo. Tagima also utilizes the potpourri of rich Brazilian woods to develop his signature *guitarras*, making them a metaphor for the country as a whole. "Brazilian woods come in a great variety of standard colors and sounds, many of them exotic, from the Amazon forest to the Rio Grande do Sul," Tagima says. "The end result is that the instruments are blessed with a variety of sounds, depending on the wood used, making for an endless mix." —K.R.



A Giannini Craviola



Few have run with that attitude more than Alex Atala and Tsuyoshi Murukami, two of Brazil's most dazzling chefs, both fiercely dedicated to marrying tradition with culinary lab fiddling. Atala, at D.O.M., is one of just six three-star chefs in Brazil. He gained prominence for seeking out indigenous ingredients employed by Indians in the Amazon and incorporating them into a haute bombshell. His transcendent tasting menus routinely feature ingredients like *priprioca*, a rainforest plant previously noticed only by perfumers, and *beldroega*, another plant indigenous to the Americas. Murukami, at Kinoshita, toys with similar culinary marriages, combining traditional Japanese Kappo techniques with

native Brazilian ingredients. At Kinoshita, you don't have a meal so much as an inspirational journey that can leave you feeling a little like a ping-pong ball bouncing between two forever-intertwined cultures of very different mindsets. Both restaurants are essential gourmand stops on any visit to Sampa.

Shocking as it may sound, cocktails—the creative kind that necessitate a menu and a mixologist—are a relatively new craze in the city. Brazil is at heart a culture inclined toward draft beer (known as *chope*), and the martini and its ilk have until recently been the pleasures of a privileged few. That all changed with SubAstor, a speakeasy-sexy basement bar located below Astor, one of Vila Madalena's best *botecos* (traditional neighborhood bars). Inside, São Paulo's *Mauricinhos* and *Patricinhas*, as Brazil's bold and beautiful are nicknamed, sip on serious concoctions, like dirty martinis (made with olive extract as opposed to juice) or the Bohemian martini, made with large capers and lemon zest. In 2009, SubAstor and its main bartender, Pereira, were christened, respectively, Most Revelational Bar and Barman of the Year by *Veja São Paulo*, the city's barometer of cool.

While you could easily lose yourself in the depths of SubAstor for an entire weekend, Sampa's live music scene has too much to offer to risk getting bogged down in all

(opposite) A *futebol* field in suburban São Paulo, and the SubAstor Bar; (this page) São Paulo Museum of Art, and Sala São Paulo, a cultural complex in a former railway station

that beauty and booze. For down-home samba that's all about the music and musicians, there are fancier places than Ó do Borogodó but none that are more authentic. A standing-room-only dive that calls on crumbling walls as artsy décor, it's reminiscent of the samba clubs in the Lapa district of Rio de Janeiro, a scene that's usually lost on sophisticated São Paulo but welcomed with *abraços* by the city's musical set.

Once you've enjoyed your fill of samba and caught a few hours of shut-eye, nothing shocks a hangover daze into shape like Centro São Paulo, a gritty microcenter that lives and breathes the true heart of an urban capital. A definite no-go at night but a nexus of grime and guts during the day, Centro São Paulo is home to an abrupt clash of beautiful colonial architecture and questionable construction. Somehow, it works. Shake off the hangover at Mercado Municipal, a dazzling gourmet food market inside a neoclassic building dating back to 1928.

Nearby, Pinacoteca do Estado, Sampa's first arts museum, stands triumphantly on Parque da Luz. Masterfully curated and a joy to wander, it was designed in 1900 by architect Ramos de Azevedo, who also designed Sampa's most-lauded structure, the Italian-influenced Teatro Municipal, about eight blocks south, in 1911.

These three buildings recall the São Paulo of an earlier, quainter era, though the current city is in its own way just as charming. Over the years, Sampa has grown like uncontained kudzu, but that makes it what it is today—an epicenter of cool that shocks and awes at every turn. Just watch out for those *motoboy*s. **CA**



## FLAVOR FAVES

*São Paulo is home to some of the world's best and most beautiful chefs.*

**BRAZIL ISN'T EXACTLY** hurting in the Beautiful People category, and São Paulo's kitchens are no exception in this regard. Despite the macho mindset that pervades Brazilian culture, Sampa's gastronomic universe is as easy on the eyes as it is on the palate. Loaded with creative culinary firepower and looks that kill, Sampa's female chefs are both gourmet and gorgeous.

"Brazilian female chefs, by their very nature, add more beauty to São Paulo's gastronomic arena," says Bel Coelho, the 31-year-old executive chef at *dui* (Alameda Franca 1590, Cerqueira César; 55 11 2649 7952), which opened in 2009. No kidding. When not turning

heads, Coelho calls on American, Spanish, French, and Portuguese influences to flush out her contemporary Brazilian fusion, resulting in knockout dishes like cashew-crusted sea bass over grilled hearts of palm, and Portuguese sausage risotto wrapped in a kale sack—a total game changer. Her Jardim Paulista neighbor, 20-year-old prodigy Renata Vanzetto, runs another of Sampa's hottest kitchens, Marakuthai (Alameda Itu 1618, Jardim Paulista; 55 11 3062 7556). Vanzetto pulled off a historic coup in 2010 when she became the youngest chef in history to receive a star from *Guia Quatro Rodas*, Brazil's culinary bible. Her spicy union

of Asian and Brazilian cuisines has lit a fire under São Paulo's heat-hesitant culinary behind.

Another Sampa superstar is 32-year-old Helena Rizzo, who, following stints in Italy and Spain, returned to Brazil in 2006 to co-command the two-star Maní (Rua Joaquim Antunes 210, Jardim Paulistano; 55 11 3085 4148). On nearly everyone's best-of list, Maní's indigenous rescue cuisine includes such delicious oddities as oven-baked manioc roots with coconut milk, cassava juice, and white truffle olive oil, as well as a two-and-a-half-hour cooked egg swimming in a hearts of palm foam—dishes that are every bit as stunning as their creator. —K.R.

FRANCO PAGETTI/VUI/AP PHOTO (RIZZO)



» HELENA RIZZO



» RENATA VANZETTO



» BEL COELHO