

04 São Paulo *Brazil*

Preface

It's known as an imposing metropolis in inviting tropical surroundings. But as the financial hub of the booming South American economy, the opportunities for doing better business in São Paulo are its real pull factor.

São Paulo is a tropical beast of a city with its 20 million Paulistano residents making their way slowly through traffic while motoring Brazil's boom.

Undoubtedly the financial capital of the world's sixth-largest economy, the nation's mighty banks such as Itaú, Banco do Brasil and Bradesco are all headquartered here. Homegrown successes include brands such as Ambev, Pão de Açúcar and Alparagatas (Havaianas). Foreign giants Carrefour, Nestlé and Unilever have long made it their base for operations in Brazil and most international companies make São Paulo their first landfall when they hit the ground to do business in the rest of Latin America.

Home to 21 billionaires, the world's sixth-largest concentration tied with Mumbai, and also the location of the BM&F Bovespa stock exchange, the fourth biggest by transactions, São Paulo's reputation as a leading financial hub is unquestionable.

The centre of São Paulo is an exclusive affair compared with the endless tangle and sprawl of outer suburbs and favelas that encircle its core. The inner urban landscape is a physical depiction of a broker's trading screen, all blinking lights and soaring heights. The world's largest whirring mass of helicopters hops from building to building and 70 per cent of Brazil's luxury goods are purchased within São Paulo in the up-scale neighbourhood of Jardins and at malls, the best being Cidade Jardim in Pinheiros.

Living in São Paulo is both invigorating and frustrating. Known locally as the *Cidade da Garoa* (City of Drizzle), the streets also get monumentally clogged with traffic. Living costs are also a dampener. However, the choice of cuisines and the quality of bars and restaurants is known

throughout the rest of Brazil (where getting a good cappuccino is nigh on impossible). And with tropical modern masters of architecture such as Isay Weinfeld and Marcio Kogan on your doorstep, having your office designed, built and detailed to within an inch of its life is a boon.

Physical infrastructure hasn't entirely kept up the pace with the city's stunning growth, although of course that doesn't affect those with helipads. Air travel in and out of the city is another matter though – the city's airports, despite investment prior to the 2014 football World Cup, are still too dilapidated for an economy of this size and ambition.

Brazil may be a BRIC nation, but its most powerful city needs to put more thought into how its residents and visitors can get around. Still, if any city can do it, São Paulo can – and if you had a choice between living in Beijing, Mumbai, Moscow or here, where would you end up? — (M)

Why it works:

- 01 Financial infrastructure: it is no secret that São Paulo is the best prepared and most secure entry into Latin America. Rio may have the beaches, the weather and the Olympics but São Paulo has the tools for new ideas.
- 02 Cosmopolitan citizens: thanks to decades of immigration from nations such as Italy and Japan, the city has a far more cosmopolitan feel than the rest of Brazil, which makes its way into the bustling street life and myriad dining options.
- 03 Social scene: the most beautiful people in the world hosting the most beautiful parties in the world – what's not to like?

