

Brazil, a rich mix of culture and natural beauty

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We lodged at Avenida Paulista — one of São Paulo's most popular postcard features. It is one of the largest business centres, and probably the largest cultural region in the city. Its architectural contrast reflects the fact that the avenue is located between the “old” and “new” parts of the city. The avenue and its surroundings, such as Rua Augusta, Alameda Santos and Rua Oscar Freire, contain numerous shops, art galleries, movie theatre, pubs, hotels, coffee shops, bookstores, gourmet restaurants and museums, including the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP). It was a pleasure to stroll leisurely in the evening at the nearby Parque Trianon, which provides a foliage-dense oasis right in the city centre.

The São Paulo Museum of Art, known locally as MASP, has the most representative and comprehensive collection of western art in Latin America. This is one of the first art museums on the continent to focus on artists of the mid-20th century and later, as well as on contemporary artists in Brazil. The building itself is an architectural gem.

An entire day was spent at the Ibirapuera Park, the city's largest park and an immense urban green space. With its monuments, museums, playgrounds, gardens, trails, lakes, and performance spaces, it is a leisure paradise, as well as a showcase of modern architecture and culture. It includes several museums, including the Museu



Afro-Brazil and the Modern Art Museum. The park's entrance is marked by a huge sculpture called Monumento as Bandeiras (The Monument to the Flags), which commemorates the multi-ethnic pioneers who opened up Brazil. An impressive obelisk nearby commemorates those who died in 1932 in the struggle for a new constitution.

Sao Paulo is a city of architectural wonders. Among them is the dome shaped Oca, one of the several buildings that make up an interesting architectural complex in

Ibirapuera Park. Designed by one of the 20th century's best-known architects, Oscar Niemeyer, the buildings houses exhibitions on three floors. Auditório Ibirapuera, the ultra-modern music hall is considered one of São Paulo's best concert venues. A marquee, executed in red painted metal, covers the main access and gives identity to the building, characterising it and differentiating it from other buildings.

In São Paulo's Ipiranga district, is the popular Independence Park. Overlooking the formal gardens of roses, topiaries and

fountains, is the Museu Paulista. Inside are large collections of costumes, decorative arts, paintings, and furniture of the Imperial Period.

One fine morning, we hopped to the Igreja Nossa Senhora Do Brasil. This unique Baroque-style church is dedicated to Our Lady of Brazil. The design of the church draws upon aspects of other amazing churches and brings them together into one design. Its ceramic panels look like St Basil's in Moscow; its towers bear resemblance to Muslim minarets; the interior recalls churches in Portugal, while the ceiling is covered in reproductions of the Sistine Chapel's paintings.

Our next station was the Mesquita Brasil, a mosque located in Cambuci, district of São Paulo city. It is the oldest mosque in Brazil and one of the oldest mosques in South America. Unfortunately, the doors were found closed, and we were told that the mosque remains open only during prayer time. We had to content ourselves with sumptuous lunch in the vicinity of the mosque with fried fish, shrimp, mixed vegetables with mushroom, fried chicken and lentils.

Brazil amazed us with its richness of culture and natural beauty, and the memories will be cherished forever.

By Dr Shamim Ahmed
Photo: Dr Shamim Ahmed

#FASHION & BEAUTY

Cost Per Wear: An important fashion rule

Have you ever tried to work out the value of your investment in clothing, shoes, and accessories? Do you know if the money you spend on a dress, a pair of shoes, or a piece of costume jewellery is really worth it? What is the cost of wearing, for instance, a dress every time? Understanding Cost Per Wear (CPW) is important, if you want to get maximum return on your investment in fashion.

CPW follows a simple formula. You divide the upfront price you pay for an item by the number of times you think you are going to wear it.

CPW = cost of an item ÷ number of wears

In a world dominated by fast fashion, most of us do not look past the price tag. Purchasing a cheaper item may initially look like a clever decision, but in most cases, “you get what you pay for.” A cheaper item will not likely last long, look frumpy after a few washes, and will be discarded quickly. If you think deeply, it is never a good investment of your money. Yes, you probably do not care because you bought it cheap, but it is not only “price” that is involved here, there are other issues, too.

Fast fashion is cheap because their manufacturers use cheap materials and cheap labour. In fast fashion, for instance, the manufactures use synthetic fabrics like polyester, acrylic, rayon, and nylon to keep costs low. The production of these synthetic fabrics results in serious environmental damages — from water and air pollution during the long and toxic production process, to microplastics being released to waterways and sewers with every wash.

Also, when a garment made from synthetic fabric like polyester is discarded, it eventually ends up in a landfill, where it will take hundreds of years to break down! The environmental impact of fast fashion is huge.



Purchasing a durable, timeless article of clothing made from natural fabric is always better, because it will last longer, feel nice on the skin, and you will get a good return on the money you spent. Yes, you pay a higher price upfront but if you take a minute to calculate the Cost Per Wear, you will see that you get a much better return on your investment when you buy a better product.

Here in the US, I can, for example, buy a polyester T-shirt for as low as \$5, which is much cheaper than a good-quality 100 percent cotton T-shirt with a price tag of \$35. However, the cheaper polyester T-shirt is often good for one or two wears; it looks shabby after one wash. It also does not feel nice on the skin because of its poor fabric quality. When you calculate the CPW of this kind of a T-shirt, it is \$2.50 per wear. I have divided the cost of the T-shirt, which is \$5 by the number of wears, which is 2.

Now think of the T-shirt that I bought for \$35. A good-quality cotton T-shirt can withstand as many as one hundred washes and still hold up well. The cost per wear of the \$35 T-shirt is only 70 cents, if I wear it 50 times. However, in most cases, I am able to wear a high-quality cotton T-shirt more than 50 times, which brings down the Cost Per Wear even more!

Fashion experts will tell you to spend your hard-earned money on better-quality items, because inferior-quality clothes, shoes, and

accessories will only drain your wallet. A lot of us have purchased, for instance, a dress, a shirt, or a pair of footwear on the whim or because it was on sale, wearing them only once, twice, or never! Who is the loser here? You, the consumer. The retailer certainly is not, because he has just made some money out of your impulsive nature.



Consumerism is making us spend the money that we do not have (credit card) and creating more trash for this planet. The good news is that more and more people are abandoning the consumerist society, the society where people spend a great deal of time, money, and energy to buy new things and place a lot of importance on owning many things, even if they fall apart after single use.

The non-fans of fast fashion save their hard-earned earnings to buy a high or

premium-quality product that their money can afford and wear it well. They do not mind repeating their clothes, shoes, and accessories. Why would they? After all, you can only repeat the things that are well made. Poorly-made things fall apart after a few wears. Well-made items can even last a lifetime, if you take proper care of them. People pass such items down to their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. For instance, a cashmere shawl, a Jamdani sari, a piece of gold jewellery, or an heirloom watch. Last but not least, a premium-quality product can also be resold at a good price, if it stays in good condition.

The fans of sustainable fashion see money spent on clothes, shoes, and accessories as an investment, not an expense, and therefore want to maximise the Cost Per Wear of the things they own. They are all for building a sustainable closet! They do not believe that the lifespan of a clothing item or a piece of jewellery is one Instagram-worthy photo and that's it! This new breed of consumers also cares about the environmental impact of their consumption and want to reduce the carbon footprint that results from their lifestyle choices.

Consider the Cost Per Wear of clothes, shoes, and accessories next time you add an item to your wardrobe. Money spent is money spent, it is not coming back to you, so why not quickly calculate if you are getting your money's worth before purchasing something. Smart shopping will help you enjoy your purchases for a long time, save money, save the environment, and keep your home clutter-free.

By Wara Karim
Photo: LS Archive/ Shahrear Kabir Heemel