



WEEKEND AWAY: SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

MAY 25, 2012



I have always wanted to visit Brazil - everything about this country feels exciting: beaches, rainforest, samba and carnival! Not to forget Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo! I am super happy that Flavia, a mother of two living in Sao Paulo, agreed to put together a weekend guide to her bustling metropole. I think it is the first South American city guide we have had here at Babyccino Kids. I hope you enjoy reading about Sao Paulo as much as I did!



Flavia:

How I ended up living in Sao Paulo:

I actually I grew up in São Paulo. Later in life I moved to NY where I spent 20 years living and working as creative director for a licensing company. When I had the kids I felt I needed to be close to family, slow down to enjoy and dedicate time to them. I do love and miss NY, but it wasn't the place we wanted to raise our kids. Brazil is a very kid-friendly country, the lifestyle here is way more relaxed and you can't beat the weather. There are so many little gems in this ginourmous city. You feel like you are in an oasis, and also right in the middle where everything happens at the same time. The most important thing is to relax and enjoy it with your loved ones.

SEE:

Here are a couple of tips of things to remember when being out and about with children in Sao Paulo. (Don't forget to take the usual things: water, snacks, sunscreen, comfortable shoes, ordinary clothing and lots of patience.) Watch your belongings and leave your valuables at the hotel, there are plenty of petty thieves on the streets. Safety is an issue in São Paulo. Be prepared to take a lot of transportation. The places you want to visit are never close to each other. Avoid rush hour, you can end up sitting in a cab (fare running) for more than an hour. Are you lost? Ask someone. Brazilians are super friendly, even if they don't speak the language. They will do their best to understand you and make sure to point you to the right direction.

If you happen to run into a farmer's market –there are lots and lots of them in different locations, on any given day of the week- by all means stop and have a pastel (fried dough with your choice of fillings) and a caldo de cana (sugarcane juice, freshly made to order).

Fundação Oscar Americano - In the midst of plants and trees of various kinds, you will find a house designed by architect Arthur Bratke Oswaldo in 1950. Inside there is a collection consisting of paintings from the seventeenth century, furniture, silverware, porcelain, tapestries and sacred art of the eighteenth century. It is worth staying for an afternoon tea.

Museu da Casa Brasileira - The Sculpture Garden is a perfect place for children to play in, while you take in the artwork. They cater Sunday brunch at the garden.

Catavento - At Catavento, a science museum, you can touch a real meteorite, look at what is inside the human body, understand how a power generator works or discover that the sun is not as round as it seems when we're at the beach. The Catavento museum has four sections: Universe, Life, Mechanics and Society, with plenty of things to do for children to satisfy their curiosity.

PLAY:

Parque da Agua Branca Go for a walk at Parque da Agua Branca. Chickens, ducks, peacocks and cats run free on the premises (my kids spend hours after them, trying to catch one with their bare hands). There is an organic farmer's market on Saturdays, reading nooks, small museums, a tiny amusement park, playgrounds, horse's arena and an aquarium.

Fazendinha Estação Natureza Spend the day at Fazendinha Estação Natureza. It is best to arrive in the morning at this pet zoo,

where a staff will guide the children to feed the animals, milk a cow, plant a sunflower, make bread and play with clay, amongst many other things. After lunch you can go horseback riding, splash baby pigs with water (they love it).

EAT

There's not one place in Brazil that is not child-friendly. Everyone will try their best to accommodate your family. The restaurants below are not, by all means, gourmet experiences with Michelin stars, but what they lack in *haute cuisine* they have in great atmosphere. Forget about bringing along paper and crayons; these restaurants have designated staff to entertain your child at no extra cost to you. Now you can really enjoy that glass of wine. Or heck, have two!

Capim Santo - This place is a hidden garden in the middle of the city. You arrive in a first garden with a patio, walk through the restaurant and suddenly a beautiful huge garden opens up in front of you, with an amazing atmosphere that immediately brings you in a beach-like ambience. It is a perfect place to indulge and enjoy a long lunch.

Brasil a Gosto - You will find this restaurant located in the Jardins neighborhood, and it is one of those restaurants that teaches you as much as it feeds you. The restaurant was founded after the chef Ana Luiza Trajano searched in 47 different Brazilian cities across the country to complete an inventory of regional ingredients and recipes and then wrote a book.

Each day Trajano offers a different three-course executive lunch specials, as well as a local hot dish that originates in a particular region such as Minas Gerais or Amapá. The restaurant feels like the rainforest with lots of natural light finding its way through the many plants that sit within (there's several inner gardens including a vertical one) and surrounding the restaurant. Blown up images from the book of farmers, fishermen, and plants and woodcarvings add to this effect.

Nakombi - The chefs prepare sushi from a *kombi* (Volkswagen van) in the middle of the dining room at this eclectic and fun restaurant where tables are surrounded by a small artificial river teeming with fish. The menu includes a good variety of sushi and non-sushi dishes.

Quintal do Bráz - Italians come to Brazil to have decent slice of pizza. This pizzeria has an open area full of trees- a good choice for those warm nights and the vibrant saloon style dining area. The place is always packed which makes the wait a little longer, especially on a Sunday, so be prepared. All the pizzas are freshly prepared right in front of the customers and baked in a wood oven, for a unique taste and crunchiness.

Praça São Lourenço - The restaurant has a big open space with lots of palms and a little pond. In addition to a kid's menu it also offers kit with a towel and a little T-shirt, in case some of the children decide to explore the pond (which is 20 cm deep). It happens more often than you think!

Chácara Santa Cecilia - A historic property of São Paulo, located in Pinheiros, in a wildlife sanctuary which refers to the period when the neighborhood was all made up of small farms. It is an innovative place that combines several different areas, including a restaurant (which is also open for lunch), two bars, dance floor, lounge, pizza bar, mezzanine outdoor exhibit space and a crafts and educational toy shop. The sound is varied and ranges from MPB, to electronic music. It is a good place to take kids, especially on weekends, when there are lots of things to see.

SHOP

Sheeeesh, this is going to be tough to narrow down! The neighborhood called Vila Madalena - it is to São Paulo what Williamsburg is to NY- that is filled with the best kids' stores, and this just one neighborhood. If you have a bit of time to explore, this the place to go.

Ronaldo Fraga Filhotes - Ronaldo Fraga designs whimsical clothes and accessories for children between 0 and 10 years old. The collections are created with lots of color, humor, comfort, handmade details and illustrated with elements of Brazilian culture.

Santa Paciência - This shop specialized in children's objects, raincoats, rainboots and a great clothes collection for children and babies. The garments are not too childish, with prints and delicate colors.

Bebê Básico - *Bebê Básico* translated means Basic Baby, and that's what the brand brings us: onesies, tops and bottoms in a clean design in great, unexpected colors.

Mafagafos - Mafagafos is a multibrand children's store. You will find pieces by local designers, making pajamas, towels, bags, swimwear and shoes. You will find everything you need for boys and girls from 2 to 6 years.

Melissa store - Because who doesn't love fashionable jelly shoes to take the kids to the playground?

Havaianas flip flops - The flagship store is a must see if you are visiting Sao Paulo.

Benedito Calixto flea market - Besides the usual selection of antiques and made-yesterday objects, the Benedito Calixto square has a large selection of mid-century furniture so cheap you may want to take it all home on your back.

STAY:

There is a wide range of hotels in the city - it all depends in which neighborhood you want to be. There's a choice of a good regular but lacking-of-charm hotels to crash after a busy long day (who cares about décor at this point?) and the boutique ones that are an experience by itself. With kids we never know, you may need to stay indoors more than you have planned. If so, you may want to go by design, after all it can be more entertaining for the both of you:

Hotel Unique - it is unique, indeed. Children love it because the architecture by Ruy Othake reminds them of a boat. Actually the cab drivers refer to it as the "boat hotel". The rooftop bar/restaurant has an amazing view.

Emiliano Hotel - Located on Oscar Freire Street, in the heart of the exclusive Jardins neighborhood of Sao Paulo, it's the perfect destination if you are in a shopping mood. The Jardins is known to be the ground zero for boutique shopping and trendy dining in São Paulo.

Tivoli São Paulo Mofarrej - The hotel is just a block away from Avenida Paulista and close to museums, subway and the Jardins.

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