

Bars & Cafés

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Hip to be square



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Escape underground Hit the jungle-style watering hole at Como Assim?!

Shop, sip, see and be seen on Saturday afternoons at Praça Benedito Calixto, says **Thiago Lasco**

There are few more agreeable ways to while away a Saturday São Paulo afternoon than to take a turn around the open-air market at Praça Benedito Calixto in Pinheiros. It is, say paulistanos, one of the few places where the city loses its formality and, with beer in hand and flip flops on feet, approaches something like the easy, street-level sociability of Rio de Janeiro.

In the mornings, families and couples wander the second-hand stalls looking for knick-knacks, furniture and classic second-hand samba CDs. From 2.30-6.30pm, the Chorinho na Praça in the middle of the market is the place to hear live *chorinho* musicians perform this whimsically

melodic samba style as you munch on *doces caseiros* – homemade sweets – and watch the crowd drift by. Mid-afternoon, there's a 'changing of the guard' as the gay contingent arrives, and the pavements fill with groups of people hanging out, drinking beer and chatting.

Whatever your sexual persuasion, throughout the day and into the evening the atmosphere here is always open, relaxed and friendly. And with the shopping done and the appetite whetted, what's called for is a cold beer and something to eat. Which is where our handy guide to the best bars on and around the square comes in.

CONSULADO MINEIRO

This colourfully decorated bar and restaurant serves typical food from Minas Gerais. The servings are generous – two dishes are enough food for five. And if you fancy some good cachaça, there's more than 100 varieties to choose from

here. To avoid a long wait, be sure to arrive before 12.30pm. Or grab a beer and enjoy the hurly-burly of the square. As you wait for a seat, graze on appetisers such as the good *mandioca com carne-de-sol* (manioc with sundried meat). *Praça Benedito Calixto 74 (3088 6055/consuladomineiro.com.br)*.

SÃO BENEDITO

One of the busiest bars on the Praça, São Benedito draws a beautiful, tanned, mixed crowd of ages from early twenties to mid-thirties. The menu features great caipiroskas in kiwi, lime and tangerine, and dishes with a seaside feel like the *moqueca de peixe com camarão* (shrimp and fish stew). A lack of windows makes it a little dark inside, where the chatter can reach impressive volumes – perfect for a rainy day, but not the ideal way to spend a sunny Saturday afternoon. *Praça Benedito Calixto 86 (3062 9678)*.

TEU LAR

Legions of young lads with dreadlocks and tattoos, some with their T-shirts off, hang out in front of this unpretentious street bar and swarm around the pavement tables. All it takes is cold, cheap beer to make their day, and this bar has some of the lowest prices around – a large bottle of Skol, Brahma or Antarctica is only R\$6. Cheers! *Rua Teodoro Sampaio 1065 (3064 3808)*.

ESCONDIDINHO DA AMADA

As this bar's name suggests, its speciality is the *escondidinho* made by owner Amada Lima. Aside from that classic sundried-meat-and-manioc dish, there's also a veggie version made with aubergine. The menu also sports a good *caldinho de feijão* (bean broth), and caipirinhas made with cachaça or sake. Families and gaggles of friends gather to listen to the live music played throughout the afternoon, which might be rock, pop or MPB. There's a R\$5 cover charge for the music. *Praça Benedito Calixto 177 (3807 7628/escondidinhodaamada.com.br)*.

COMO ASSIM?!

Escape down two ramps to the second floor below the bustling boutique stores of the Como Assim?! market, and you'll find a mini-Camden Town, with eclectic racks of clothes, incense and knick knacks – and a charming, serene bar. Bouncy seats made of recycled tyres are set against a 'jungle' backdrop made of a huge painted tarpaulin topped by rounds of razor wire. A clued-up crowd fills this quirky joint, where the service can be a little clumsy, and where there's nothing fancy on the menu – just cans of Skol, caipirinhas and a cheap feijoada at R\$18. But it's an eccentric little oasis of calm at the heart of the busy square, and for that, we salute it. *Praça Benedito Calixto 158 (3081 0641)*.



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Gaudy get-together Gaudi-style mosaics adorn Escondidinho da Amada