

## fashion



# Where do they pay £6,000 for a knit? Silicon Valley

They're hand-knitted in Italy, but wow, what a price tag, says **Anna Murphy**

**Y**ou have heard the term high-net-worth, jargon that seems to be passing, distressingly, into common usage.

But may I introduce you to high-knit-worth? This is the kind of stupendously luxurious jumper that high-net-worth individuals — defined as having liquid assets of more than \$1 million — get to wear. Forget the statement jumper, this is the peroration jumper. And there is no brand better at it than the Italian luxemoth Brunello Cucinelli.

Take this example. It's hand-knitted using — wait for it — cashmere, mohair, wool, a cashmere-and-silk velour, a mohair-and-alpaca blend and cotton embellished with different sizes of sequin. And it's hand-knitted, not in a place where labour is cheap a very long way away from here, but in a pretty hilltop Umbrian village called Solomeo, a place that Signor Cucinelli has made it his business — literally — to regenerate and, where necessary, restore.

To describe this jumper as expensive doesn't cover it. It's £5,790. No, I didn't accidentally put an extra nought on the end. It is edging towards six grand. And no, I haven't tried it on. Heck, I would be terrified just to hang out near by it, never mind wear it. But I have been lucky enough to wear other Brunello Cucinelli items. And they have been, without exception, sublime, not a word I use lightly. The quality. The feel. The high-netty-ness.

You may be cross at the idea that an item of clothing can cost that much, and I understand that. But, having dabbled with the brand I also understand why, if you had the money, you might invest. If someone can afford the very best and if, in paying for it, they support good practices, why not?

I think it's because this is a supposedly casual item of clothing that we lesser mortals find it harder to get our heads around the price tag. We are used to the idea that a tailored suit can cost a lot, or a handbag, but not that a jumper can break the bank too. But these are to a large extent preconceptions. Producing anything very well indeed, and in the first world, costs a lot of money. What's more, said preconceptions don't fit with the way most very rich people want to live and dress these days, which is like us — in the sense of being casual — albeit not like us — in the sense of wearing amped-up iterations of a quality we can't imagine. They don't want to sit around in clothes they can't breathe in any more than we do.

One of the biggest marketplaces for Brunello, as it's known to its friends, is



Cardigan, £5,790, [shop.brunellocucinelli.com](http://shop.brunellocucinelli.com)  
Below: Wool Runners, £95, [allbirds.co.uk](http://allbirds.co.uk)

“**Silicon Valley has nailed dressing — now they can work on ethics**

Silicon Valley. The brand's sweatpants and hoodies are practically a uniform among the technocracy. And it's telling too that the website has a big travelwear section. What better way to circumvent — and indeed dominate — the globe than in a virgin wool, silk and cashmere terry-towelling-effect hoodie and sweats? (Reduced to £1,386 and £1,036 respectively, in case you are wondering.)

In 2019 what success looks like, sartorially speaking, is what Silicon Valley wears, which — when it isn't the big sports brands — tends to be Brunello. Or it's what is worn by that other great visual influencer of our age, young Hollywood. Which tends to be another stealth-extreme-wealth

brand, the Elder Statesman.

This Los Angeles-based operation is even more interesting from an anthropological perspective because some of it looks like the sort of stuff that's worn by people who live in a camper van. Like the dip-dye jumper with the words “California Republic”. Yet that knit is cashmere and costs £1,787 ([farfetch.com](http://farfetch.com)). And the white one with a black marijuana-leaf pattern is £1,601. Not for drop-outs, but for those who have very much dropped in, economically speaking, yet don't like to look as if they have. Again, if you get your hands on anything by the Elder Statesman — and it does offer less trippy designs — the quality is off the scale.

I was talking with an old-world billionaire recently who was raging generally at Silicon Valley's failure to do the right thing — be it on matters related to fake news or taxation — and specifically at how if you google his name the top auto-complete suggestion is “dying”. (“I am NOT dying! Or at least no more than anyone else,” he said, laughing.) He went on to argue that the richest and most powerful people on the planet trying to pass themselves off like the rest of us via what they wear is a malevolent PR drive. I think they have nailed dressing right. Perhaps now they can work on the doing what's right bit.

## Slip into these trainers

The January conundrum. That you want to be wearing your slippers, but you know you should be wearing your trainers. Behold, the ultimate genre-busting solution — trainers that feel like slippers. Really. As worn by everyone from Larry Page, the co-founder of Google, to Jennifer Garner, an actress in the running for best hair. Those same dual aesthetic axes of our era. The upper is made from merino wool from New Zealand and Australia, the laces from recycled plastic, the sole from sugar-cane derivatives and, in contrast to most trainers, there is nary a petrochemical.

They come in an array of great colours and are machine-washable. I am in love with mine, which — full disclosure — are majoring more as slipper than trainer. There's always February. £95, [allbirds.co.uk](http://allbirds.co.uk).

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COVER: GETTY IMAGES; BELOW: REX FEATURES, GETTY IMAGES



Sweater, £49.99, trousers, £29.99, [mango.com](http://mango.com)

# Are you ready for the new power dressing? It's beige

From Meghan Markle to Melania Trump, the elite are swathing themselves in a bland classic, says **Harriet Walker**





Melania Trump



Trench coat, £129, stories.com



Blogger Gala Gonzalez in Max Mara



Designer Jeanne Damas in Jacquemus

**B**iscuit, caramel, ivory, sand. The fashion industry has tried to give 2019's biggest trend any number of soigné, aspirational labels, but there's no hiding the truth. At least

Net-a-Porter is being honest: at its new-season trends presentation, one section was titled "50 Shades of Beige".

"We saw this inescapable sea of it on and off the catwalk this season," says the online retailer's global buying director, Elizabeth von der Goltz. "Beige is now the epitome of chic."

Forget its boring, bland and basic reputation — in 2019, beige is businesslike, even brave. That we're swaddling ourselves in inoffensive cloudy colours can't be a coincidence in a year that is likely to be full of political and civil turmoil.

The global elite and those in charge know it only too well. Oatmeal-ish shades have become a uniform for power dressers on the front row of fashion week and international politics alike. See Meghan Markle and Melania Trump, beige ambassadors both — not to mention Hillary Clinton, Angela Merkel and that other female presence on the world stage, Kim Kardashian. For all her talk of a "red, white and blue Brexit", Theresa May wore beige to defend her deal outside No 10 last month.

At fashion week in September, Riccardo Tisci used his debut at Burberry to layer beige on beige on beige, in homage to the shade of the label's signature trench coat. Rather than staid, it looked streetwise, in

leather, logos and loose-fitting, sporty strides. At Dior and Tibi models wore beige trouser suits, beige ballerina skirts, beige coats, even beige pumps. And to think how the Duchess of Cambridge has been castigated for those nude courts over the years.

Among the street-style crowd, beige has become a game of chicken — that is, how much is too much? Answer: no such thing. The Scandi set are particularly good at it, layering cashmere jumpers, cotton T-shirts and silk midskirts, all in matching shades of not-quite-colours that span the spectrum from bread sauce to toffee, and with several thousand paint-chart iterations in between.

Their approach isn't just slinging on a cream jumper, say, or a pair of chinos. For the 1 per cent, beige is a head-to-toe lifestyle choice, one that speaks of jet-set travel and enormous dry cleaning bills. You may not be fluent in either, but prepare for what personal stylists call "tonal dressing" to enter your lexicon this year too.

Vogue's fashion features editor, Ellie Pithers, is already a convert. "I love it," she says, "because you can open your wardrobe, choose all items in the same colour, shove them on together and look like you have really refined taste. Ease yourself in with a trip to Arket."

Not only does the high street brand do a fine line in the sort of chic, utilitarian pieces that



Jumpsuit, £295, available from February 6, tarajarmon.com

Jumper, £20, trousers, £42, warehouse.co.uk

Coat, £119, dress, £25.99, zara.com

make up an on-point, all-beige ensemble, it also offers the opportunity to shop by colour wheel, so you can peruse every item in the porridge segment at once. Tonal heaven. (My picks are the crewneck fisherman jumper, £135, and straight jeans, £55, arket.com.)

Before you go shopping, though, there's every chance you've got what you need already. Rather than building your outfit (that's a "beige outfit", keep up) from scratch, try wearing your trench or mac over some suitably pale knitwear to get a feel for it. You might need to counter some deep-seated, long-held ideas to begin with; for so long, matching beige macs and slacks were for perverts, but not any more.

As I watched so many milky models in cappuccino-foam hues file past

## The Duchess of Cambridge has been castigated for nude courts

during fashion week, I'll admit my heart sank at the prospect. Too drab, too unforgiving of any complexion paler than a classic café au lait; altogether too easily stained — and yet. I realised when I got home that there had been a slow creep in my wardrobe without my realising: stone greys, blush pinks, rich tan, gold jewellery and pearls — all these will add interest and depth to this year's beige-on-beige obsession.

"You have to choose the right tone for your skin, otherwise you'll look washed out," says the stylist Anna Berkeley. "Warmer skins need caramel and golden beiges; cooler skins need pale oyster and taupe."

Mango's new-in section is an ode to off-white in all its infinite variety. I particularly like its ribbed knit sweater and skirt co-ord in caramel (£35.99 and £29.99 respectively, mango.com), and its belted jersey dress, styled with an unstructured cream coat (£35.99 and £139.99). At Zara, a toffee-coloured teddy bear coat or jacket is the easiest way to kick off a January beige-fest (£59.99 and £39.99, both in the sale, zara.com).

I've found beige trousers are a sticking point, but Arket's jeans (as above) and & Other Stories' workwear culottes in — you guessed it — beige have gone some way to changing my mind (£59, stories.com). My instinct is to avoid tailored beige trousers for fear of looking too *Brittas Empire*, but I like Ganni's wide-leg stretch chinos, which come in the poetically named shade of "Cuban sand", win my prize for best beige synonym, and are at present less than half-price at £60 (ganni.com).

"Cinch your waist to avoid looking like a boy scout," Pithers says. "You probably need to wear heels too, for the same reason. Try cream and chocolate brown and mix up texture: a chunky knit with a pleated skirt."

Don't forget to avoid ketchup and jam sandwiches too.

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