

Style

What to wear to the office when it's too hot to wear anything



Anna Berkeley

Ask a stylist

live in New York, where temperatures are regularly above 29C – and the subway gets much hotter. How can I beat the heat and still look appropriately dressed in the office?

If you are commuting to the office then you need a space to store a few essentials. Even if you're hot desking, try and commandeer an area where you can keep an emergency cover-up capsule. I am not talking woollen hats and gloves, more like a jacket and a nifty piece of knitwear.

If space is tight, then blazers and knits can sit happily on the back of the chair and I'd try a summer wool for the jacket and a merino or cotton cashmere mix for the knit.

What's your office weather zone? Is it freezing due to aggressive air con or more like a hothouse? For hot offices choose natural fabrics, longer lengths and clever cuts. If you hate your arms, which, sadly, so many women do, don't suffer in a full sleeve.

Firstly, look for a lower armhole. I realise that this throws up the issue of the dreaded underarm pudge – but it's worse if an armhole is too tight and digs in. A lower armhole allows more air around the armpit. Apologies if this is unsavoury, but it prevents sweat patches, makes your clothes last longer and you don't feel so restricted. If you go too low you will see your bra.

If this is the case, you may want to wear a bralette or simply choose a bra colour similar to the top or dress.

Sleeves matter – choose an open cap,

floaty short or roomy elbow sleeve – blessed ventilation and a flattering cut in one go.

For offices where a suit is encouraged, choose cotton, linen or natural fibre mixes. Bottega Veneta does several linen blend trousers you can pair with a jacket or a simple silk shirt or tee. Vince, The Row and MaxMara also have smart summer trousers in cool fabrics. Ralph Lauren has a beautiful soft linen suit.

If your office dress code is more relaxed, Three Graces's classic Clarissa in cotton poplin is perfect for coverage. I've also fallen head over heels for two-year-old Australian brand Palma Martin, which combines old world nostalgia with a modern lens. Its Unchartered cotton dress (from £395, palmamartin.com) creates a sculpted waist whether you have one or not, and the cut of the sleeve allows air to circulate. Jersey too is so comfortable – Tory Burch's Belted Striped Dress has a square-cut sleeve and can be dressed up with a heeled sandal (£272 on sale, farfetch.com).

Building an outfit around one tailored piece helps to keep it smart. During mid-June's heatwave, I selected a Hanro vest layered under a much-loved Margaret Howell linen waistcoat. I added a pair of elasticated waist, wide-leg silk trousers from Markus Lupfer and a flat Marni sandal. Presto! A great outfit which kept me cool and undeterred by the Sahara-like conditions. It's easy to dress this type of trouser up or down, working

seamlessly with trainers and a white tee or a strappy sandal, smart blazer and a silk top.

Pair this camel Veronica Beard waistcoat with white, cream, black or red trousers for a sophisticated way to stay cool. Or go for optic white and layer a coloured vest underneath (SIR Clemence buttoned waistcoat, £225, farfetch.com).

For trousers, channel the sunset with orange silks from Dorothee Schumacher. They are elasticated at the back and flat on the front so they're comfort personified (£560, mytheresa.com). Or Totême's signature PJ trouser, which suits a larger frame.

If your place of work is colder than a Starbucks, then build layers. Merino is a devilishly clever yarn as it's adaptable and does what's called in the trade, "cool/warm" – meaning that it can work with whatever temperature you are. Let's say you commute on a warm day in a sleeveless cotton top, a light cotton trouser and smart sandals, you can then add a simple crew or V-neck merino to protect you from that ice cold blast in the office. I really like the ease of Jigsaw's relaxed sweater (£110, jigsaw-online.com)

If it's arctic, use a light cashmere (Zadig and Voltaire's "Brumy" is a good bet and currently on sale, £199, zadig-et-voltaire.com) or throw a chunky cardigan over the top. Be careful here, though: cardigans, à la mode as they



◀ Veronica Beard waistcoat, £475, net-a-porter.com



▶ Totême wide-leg pants, £485, net-a-porter.com



◀ Three Graces London Clarissa dress, £475, threegraceslondon.com



▶ Ralph Lauren blazer, £349, ralphlauren.co.uk

are, are still tricky. You want Sofia Coppola not nosy neighbour. Wear a lower cut top or silky shirt underneath, roll the sleeve and give it a bit of a tuck. NavyGrey's classic cardigan is easy to wear and Char's new unisex style, Codling, is a light alpaca with just the right level of slouch. &Daughter and LouLou Studio are also worth a look.

Instead of the ubiquitous trainer for commuting you need an easy walking sandal. I don't mean an actual walking sandal – we aren't ramblers. What you're after is a sporty, supportive sole and an upper that doesn't look like something your dad would wear gardening. Look to the sports brands for these. I buy an Adidas or a Nike sports sandal every few years.

I don't often recommend buying shoes second-hand but if they are, say, Oran sandals from Hermès in mint condition, then it can be worth trawling. Jil Sander's padded pair has deliciously thick straps and will lend an elegant finish to any summer outfit.

Whatever you do, do not succumb to those tempting shapeless linen dresses that look like a discarded dishcloth at the end of the day. They do nothing for anyone.

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From left: Olivier Rousteing for Jean Paul Gaultier; 'hyper, hyper femme' at Schiaparelli; Jean Paul Gaultier — Pascal Le Segretain/Getty Images; Giovanni Giannoni

Designers add decadence at Paris couture

Report | Political turmoil and the cost of living crisis were left far behind amid escapism, gold and glamour, writes Lauren Indvik

In Paris, the pavements are thick with sightseers. Queues of tourists snake around the stone facade of the Louis Vuitton store on the Place Vendôme and Dior's four-storey, two-month-old uber-flagship on the Avenue Montaigne, the most expensive monobrand store renovation parent company LVMH has ever underwritten.

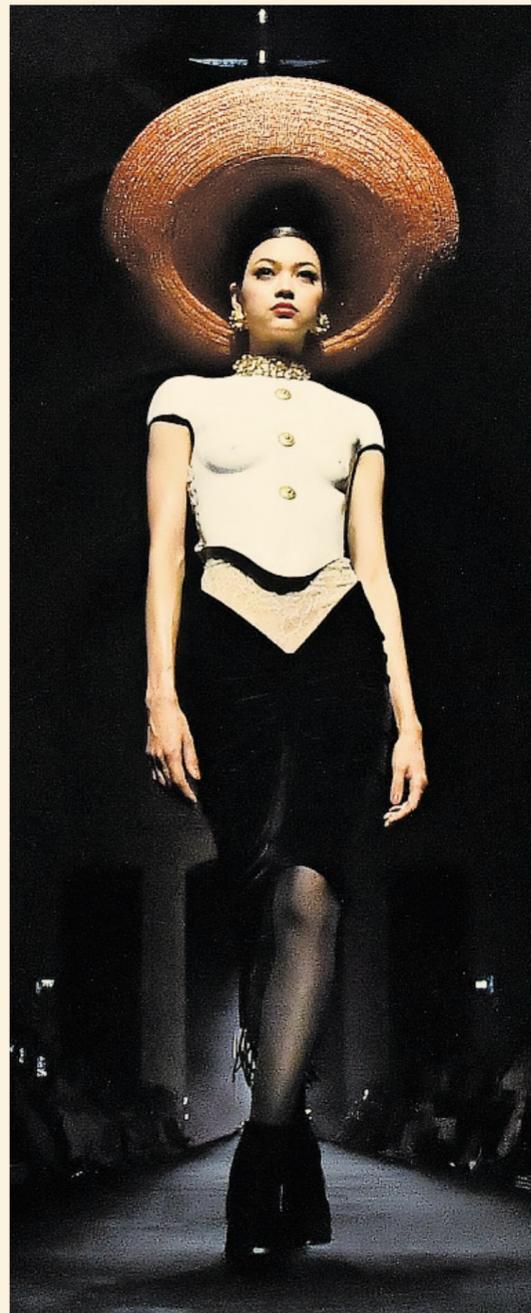
Certainly there is a whiff of the Gilded Age about it all, with clients lining the front rows of shows in five-figure evening gowns as a Tory leadership contest and the cost of living crisis dominate headlines back in the UK. ("I don't think the people who buy this are really affected by that," quipped British designer Kim Jones, gesturing at his ethereal, Japonisme-inspired collection for Fendi.)

The pandemic has ballooned the net worths of billionaires and widened the wealth gap. It's a divide that played out at the shows, where black velvet and gold were the look *du jour*, and at retail: on Wednesday Balenciaga opened a pair of "couture stores" on the Avenue George V, where clients are invited to customise €3,500 eyewear and handbags priced from €8,500 to €15,000.

Chanel plans to open dedicated boutiques for top spenders in Asia early next year. The top 1 to 2 per cent of clients account for about a fifth of sales at couture brands, Citi luxury analyst Thomas Chauvet estimates, and these brands are hustling to draw them back into stores.

The renewed taste for black velvet and gold can partly be laid at the feet of Schiaparelli designer and 36-year-old Texan Daniel Roseberry, whose knack for designing red carpet dresses that resonate on social media has put the house acquired by Tod's founder Diego Della Valle in 2006 back on the fashion map. It has also led to a dedicated exhibition *Shocking! The Surreal World of Elsa Schiaparelli* at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

The exhibition opened just hours after Monday's show. Models stepped out from behind smoke and black curtains as if from a 1930s jazz club in hourglass-shaped cocktail dresses with pointed shoulders and corseted waists, their faces shadowed by broad, flat boater hats by British milliner Stephen Jones. The emphasis was on waists and hips and also on breasts, which became moulds for white leather bustiers, were



Above: Schiaparelli designer Daniel Roseberry added 1930s jazz club notes to his collection

Right: Nicole Kidman added her star power for Balenciaga
Victor Virgile/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images



Above: airiness and ease were hallmarks of Chanel's show

dusted in gold or left largely exposed over a black cocktail dress whose trompe l'œil lungs paid homage to the 1938 "Skeleton Dress" Schiaparelli created with Salvador Dalí. Flowers moulded from glass, leather, crystal and tulle frothed from the décolleté of a black velvet jumpsuit.

It was archetypal couture – decadent, glamorous and "hyper, hyper femme", Roseberry said during a run-through the evening before. Designers feel pressure to make political statements

'Couture dresses in the Fifties were really heavy, not for life today. I believe they should feel well'

through clothes, and he wanted to avoid that "dreary self-seriousness" and to "stay close to that person who fell in love with fashion", he added.

Dior's Maria Grazia Chiuri has no such qualms. She lined her show space at the Rodin Museum with vast panels embroidered with flowers and the tree of life, a favourite emblem of Ukrainian artist Olesia Trofymenko; backstage, Chiuri wore a faded "We Should All Be Feminists" T-shirt from her first ready-to-wear collection in 2015. "I am worried it is only the beginning," she said of the war in Ukraine and the overturning of Roe vs Wade in the US. "The risk is we adapt and don't react."

Chiuri's couture clothes are not loud. Their beauty is in their intricacy and Indian embroidery, which cannot be easily appreciated on a phone screen. In this collection, colours were soft and muted, hemlines long, with opulent jacquards supplanted by straightforward cotton, silk and tartan wool inspired by folkloric costumes. An ankle-length dress of grey woollen cheesecloth was interwoven with bands embroidered in cream mouliné, like a close-up of a pattern on a loom – a highlight. "Couture

dresses in the Fifties were really heavy, not for life today," she said of the collection's lightness. "I believe they should feel well."

There was an airiness and an ease, too, at Chanel, where Virginie Viard channelled Coco Chanel in the 1930s through tweed skirt suits cut straight and long at the hip and simple wool evening dresses in moss and black with pronounced front pockets.

Giorgio Armani, who turns 88 next week, likewise infused his Armani Privé collection with floating fabrics and cheerful colours – hot pink, lilac, amethyst – as Delphine Arnault, daughter of LVMH chair Bernard Arnault, looked on from the front row (a publicist quickly quashed acquisition speculation, saying they had met at one of her Cheval Blanc hotels and she attended merely as a friend). Though light and wearable, the beaded jackets and silk pleated trousers looked dated, sometimes matronly. "It has been the season of terrible trousers," a seatmate said. He isn't wrong.

What a contrast, then, to behold Demna Gvasalia's second couture collection for Balenciaga the following morning. Held in the same 10 Avenue George V salon where Cristóbal Balenciaga once enthralled his clients with his two-hour shows – one of his original models came out of retirement to walk in this one – Gvasalia sent out men and women of many ages in black neoprene scuba suits and dresses that moulded to their bodies like a second skin, their faces masked by smooth black helmets that gave them a menacing, alien look. The neoprene was technically "very hard" to work with, he said afterwards.

Gvasalia and his teams of designers and seamstresses eschewed traditional materials elsewhere too: straight-leg jeans spliced from old pairs and frayed at the seams, an oversized red T-shirt draped as if it were silk underpinned with wire or horsehair (an underlayer of aluminium kept its shape), and silk embroidered to look like fur. It was couture, made modern. Impressive too were the casting "gets": Dua Lipa, Kim Kardashian, Nicole Kidman (her husband Keith Urban sat front row).

In theatrics, it was rivaled only by Maison Margiela's John Galiano, who in lieu of a traditional runway show live-recorded a half-hour film in the analogue manner of Old Hollywood. Models wielded fake guns and lip-synced to pre-recorded dialogue, enacting a cyberpunk Western turned ER drama turned horror film (with several other genres spliced in-between). The darkness of the set left little opportunity to appreciate the clothes worn by the dozens of models, but as entertainment and a brand-building exercise – Margiela is the fastest-growing brand at Renzo Rosso's OTB group – it worked.

Working, too, is Pieter Mulier's gentle remaking of Richemont-owned Alaïa in the wake of its founder's passing in 2017. Although what he showed is technically ready-to-wear, it might have passed for couture, so precise were the cuts of the subtly textured bodysuits, hooded dresses and crocodile-embossed leather coats shown in the concrete guts of a future Alaïa store. He is cementing the house codes and carefully commercialising them, with belts and bags that have plenty of potential at retail. But for it to be better understood as ready-to-wear, and not as demi-couture, it ought to join the ready-to-wear schedule.

As for the point of couture amid a cost of living crisis? My favourite response of the week came from Schiaparelli's Roseberry, whose mother had recently asked whether he ought to design more affordable clothes. "And I said, mom, my life was not changed by going to Target."