

# Style

## perennial pashmina

The elegant, adaptable standby takes well to warmer weather

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**T**alk about a Butterfly Effect. Who would have thought a little fur shed from a goat in the Himalayas could cause such a ruckus in the United States?

It's been at least a decade since pashminas hit big in North America, and while they have become a ubiquitous fashion accessory (who doesn't own at least one?), sales of pashmina scarves show no signs of slowing.

"They have consistently been a classic fashion accessory, and there has definitely been an increase in sales," said Blair Rhodes, CEO of the Pashmina Store ([www.thepashminastore.com](http://www.thepashminastore.com)), an online retailer that sells Grade A pashmina delivered direct from Nepal to Humble, Texas. Sales for the first quarter of 2007 increased 35 percent compared with the same period last year, he added.

Pashmina, a term used for both the material and the accessory, serves as everything from an office wrap to an in-flight blanket to a hip-slung sarong. But isn't the material — some of the finest cashmere available — best suited to winter?

Not anymore.

"Here in America, we tend to associate pashmina with being the more thick cashmere style," Rhodes said. But the growing popularity of lightweight, two-ply pashmina scarves — called "ring" style because it can actually slide through a ring band — is leading to the sales boom.

Years ago, pashminas were the province of the elite. The standard 28-by-80-inch wraps began showing up in the States

in the 1990s for about \$200 to \$300. Prices gradually began to drop when pashmina producers started farm-raising goats in chilly Mongolia, Rhodes said.

Today, an authentic pashmina can cost as little as \$49 to \$69 at the Pashmina Store, up to about \$100 at Macy's. There are 100 percent cashmere pashminas and silk blend versions, but if you spot a scarf for \$5 or \$10, you're probably getting an imitation.

The sheer wraps, available in spring colors such as rich blues and lavender, have been a hit at weddings, Rhodes noted. Guests casually toss a pashmina over the shoulders and brides rely on them as gifts for the wedding party. Even black and white — the trendy colors of the season — have been big sellers recently for the Pashmina Store.

At Macy's, pinks and blues have been popular, said Alicia Allen, associate buyer for dress accessories. The pashmina "is something we've been really successful with," said Allen. "It's classic, it's elegant, and it serves a lot of purposes."

And the look is very popular in Atlanta, especially Marietta, said Rhodes, based on the volume of sales at the Pashmina Store. Any time pashminas appear in popular culture, the company sees a surge in sales, he said. Oprah boosted the demand when she announced that one can never have too many pashminas.

And then there were the weeks following the DVD release of "Last Holiday," starring Queen Latifah.

"We got calls saying, 'What is a pashmina? I need a pashmina. I want what Queen Latifah wore,'" Rhodes said.

And thanks to those busy goats, no one needs to go without.

### how to wear pashmina

As the popularity of pashminas continues, their utility grows. Invent your own wrap style or use these classic methods to see you through chilly spring nights and air-conditioned summers.



#### ▲ Noose style:

Fold pashmina in half lengthwise, then fold in half, to create a loop. Wrap around the back of your neck and pull the free ends through. "Ring" pashmina, 100 percent cashmere in Blue Atoll (\$49); [www.thepashminastore.com](http://www.thepashminastore.com).



#### ◀ Shoulder wrap:

Wrap a standard-size pashmina around the shoulders and knot it in the front, just below chest level. Pashmina by Betsey Johnson, 60 percent cashmere, 40 percent silk (\$99); Macy's.

Photo by CHRIS HUNT / Staff



#### ◀ Over-the-shoulder toss:

Unfold the pashmina fully. Drape across shoulders and toss one end casually over the opposite shoulder. "Ring" pashmina, 100 percent cashmere in lavender (\$49); [www.thepashminastore.com](http://www.thepashminastore.com).