



Ralph Lauren's Spring 2026 show in New York City.

Photography: courtesy of Ralph Lauren.

AMERICAN DREAM

Built around a palette of white, black and red, Ralph Lauren's Spring 2026 collection showcased the house's classic codes, suffused with an assuredly current sensibility

words TESS DE VIVIE DE RÉGIE

Few fashion houses have timelessness down to such a fine art as Ralph Lauren. Think of how they've managed to weave preppy style, once the preserve of blue-blooded Ivy League college students, into the universal sartorial lexicon, via their polo shirts, cable-knit jumpers and rowing blazers – codes that have become staples of the genre, season after season, and totems of an aspirational lifestyle that extends beyond the clothing itself.

There is also, of course, Mr Lauren's genius for evening wear that is at once understated and glamorous: that iconic Grace Kelly-esque pink taffeta ballgown worn by Gwyneth Paltrow to collect her Oscar for *Shakespeare in Love* in 1999, for instance, or Lupita Nyong'o's jaw-dropping red silk cape dress at the 2014 Golden Globes. Since emerging onto the sartorial landscape in 1967, Ralph Lauren has perfected a vision of quintessentially all-American chic that has served as a throughline down the years to form one of the strongest visual brand identities in fashion.

And just shy of six decades later, that truism holds as much weight as ever, as exemplified by the brand's Spring 2026 Collection, presented at New York Fashion Week in September 2025, with Oprah Winfrey, Laura Dern, Naomi Watts, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Jessica Chastain and Katherine Langford all in attendance. On the runway, yet another expression of the Ralph Lauren woman emerged: sophisticated, polished and with a quietly relaxed sensibility.

The show's venue at the company's headquarters on New York City's Madison Avenue was anchored around a restrained black-and-white colour scheme, decorated simply with wicker chandeliers and a curved staircase, leaving little room for distraction from the clothes themselves. A similarly monochromatic collection followed suit, articulated in white, cream, black and splashes of red – but delve below the tidy simplicity of the colour palette and the silhouettes' clean lines and a kaleidoscope of details reveal themselves.

Note a push-and-pull in proportions: abbreviated silhouettes in the form of pedal pushers, bustier corsets and bra tops under oversized blazers created a relaxed and sensual feel, counterpointing the sumptuous volume of maxi dresses and floor-skimming skirts that draped around the wearer majestically. Casual mini T-shirts also appeared with showstopping skirts adorned with sequins.

Skin was on show via subtle cutouts and one-shouldered dresses. Transparency contrasted and complemented opacity, with block colours flanking diaphanous airy gowns and linen shirts. A series of resplendent evening-wear looks encompassed spangly metallic net gowns and parachute dresses crafted from silk.

Stripes, both vertical and horizontal, featured across shirts, ties, suits and dresses, as did eye-catching pockets on jackets and jumpsuits. A pretty rose pattern cropped up on tea dresses and shorts, while textured leather, woven or embroidered



FROM LEFT Mindy Kaling, Jessica Chastain, Naomi Watts, Ariana DeBose and Laura Dern at Ralph Lauren's Spring 2026 show.



into linen, was also a key detail of the collection. Accessories, too, reigned supreme, lending a fresh edge to classic lines. Oversized floppy straw hats were a recurring motif throughout, paired with A-line summer dresses, leather and silk coats and atop a very *Annie Hall*-coded shirt, V-neck jumper and tie ensemble.

Jewellery – notably sculptural sheet and pearl drop earrings, silver coral-shaped pendants or stamped metal plates strung from black cord, nodding to this season's '90s-inspired vibe – imparted an unexpected and intriguing twist. Silver cuffs and chest plates injected a clean metallic note, as did leather and scarf belts accented with glinting buckles.

Shoes, fashioned from woven leather, included brogues and summery espadrilles, sandals and pumps. Bucket and micro shoulder bags elevated simple day-wear ensembles and were flanked by elegant top-handle iterations, crafted from a range of leathers – black alligator, cream and white.

The collection showcased the house's talent for tailoring that is polished yet comfortable enough for everyday wear. Ralph Lauren's rich history of "menswear for women" was

drawn upon – a masterclass in power dressing that was relaxed not fussy, sharp yet soft.

Trademark Ralph Lauren silhouettes, nodding to '80s power dressing, were riffed on via cut, fabric and material. Scrubbed of stuffy corporate connotations, a classic cream-robe stripe pantsuit felt unexpected and cool thanks to a tie-waist

detail, textured layering of a Breton tee and voile shirt and the addition of a silver-shell cord necklace. A skirt suit and tie read less boardroom and more beachside chic when combined with canvas espadrilles and baroque pearl

earrings. The shirt, that workhorse of any woman's wardrobe, was reworked, featuring pussy bows and a bib-front paired with a tie.

Strong yet sensual: such is how Ralph Lauren characterises this collection, one that proudly channels the brand's DNA, established over the course of 60 years, filtered through a lens sensitive to the desires of the 2026 woman. The vibe was understated, thoroughly self-assured and indisputably cool – all up, modern yet timeless pieces that will become wardrobe staples for decades to come. **HB**

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