

# One stopover that deserves a stay: Geneva

## If you go . . .

**Where to stay**  
**Intercontinental**  
7-9 chemin du Petit-Saconnex  
011-41-22-919-3939  
interconti.com/geneva  
A luxury hotel near the Palais des Nations. Doubles \$445-\$700.  
**Hotel Astoria**  
6, Place Cornavin  
011-41-22-544-5252  
astoria-geneve.ch  
Doubles \$185-\$259.  
**Where to eat**  
**Auberge du Lion d'Or**  
5 Place Pierre-Gautier  
011-41-22-736-4432  
liondor.ch  
Less than 2 miles from Geneva's Old Town in Cognoy, with a view of the lake and mountains. Entrees \$70-\$120.  
**Du Midi**  
4, Place Chevelu  
011-41-22-544-1500  
hotel-du-midi.ch  
Daily specials from \$22. Three-course menus from \$38.  
**Les Armures**  
1 Rue du Puits-Saint Pierre  
011-41-22-310-9172  
hotel-les-armures.ch  
Traditional Swiss cuisine. Entrees \$17-\$46.  
**What to do**  
**Musée d'Art et d'Histoire**  
2 rue Charles-Galland  
011-41-22-418-2600  
mah.ville-ge.ch/  
Outstanding collections dating from prehistory.  
**Parc Villa Barton, La Perle du Lac, and Parc Mon Repos**  
Located on the northern shore of Lac Léman, these three contiguous parks provide an idyllic setting for an afternoon of people-watching.  
**Palais des Nations**  
14 avenue de la Paix  
011-41-22-917-4896  
unog.ch  
Home of Europe's United Nations headquarters and set in a massive park.

By Jerry Soverinsky  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

GENEVA — In my 15 years as an international tour guide, I visited this city perhaps 20 times. But each time it was a waypoint to what I believed were greater adventures.

People change — and I realized recently that here in Geneva, culture, recreation, leisure, shopping, gastronomy, and geography cohabit in a world-class environment.

Switzerland's second largest city is at the southwestern tip of Lac Léman (Lake Geneva), with the Rhône and Arve rivers flowing west of the city center and the Jura Mountains and Alps hovering majestically in the background. This setting is a primary reason Geneva developed into a focal point for international trade and culture.

The banks of the freshwater lake are lined with bustling cities, genteel villages, castles, vineyards, and cycling paths. Western Europe's highest peak, Mount Blanc, visible from many vantage points in the city, is an hourlong train ride away. But it takes just a few minutes to reach less lofty peaks; a cable car that leads to Le Salève (Geneva Mountain) is less than five miles away.

Since 1559 when John Calvin founded his College and Academy (a future center for Enlightenment scholarship), Geneva has attracted some of the world's most influential artists, musicians, philosophers, and writers. Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Balzac, Liszt, Piaget, and Dostoevsky all lived or spent significant time in Geneva, and their influences are palpable.

With roughly 40 museums and galleries, festivals and concerts, a Conservatory of Music that has developed renowned classical talent, and a Grand Théâtre that offers acclaimed operas and ballets accompanied by the city's 100-year old Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, there's a nearly endless variety of pursuits.

And like many of Europe's leading cities, Geneva can be covered on foot. Even at its most distant points, you're never more than a 30-minute walk — most of which



RICARDO DE LA RIVA

The Passage du Mont Blanc takes its name from Western Europe's highest peak, which is visible from Geneva and lends its name to many things in the Swiss city on Lac Léman.

can be traced along the lakefront — from your destination.

I spent considerable time at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, which chronicles the stories of countries and individuals “who have placed themselves in the service of mankind.” From the moment you are greeted by multiple statues of hooded kidnap victims in the museum's courtyard, you gain a deeper appreciation for the significance of the Red Cross movement.

Locals converge for drinks, snacks, sunbathing, and spa services at Bains des Paquis, where 50-minute massages cost \$60 and entry to the Turkish baths is \$17. Here you're just as likely to share a sauna with millionaire bankers as with university students. The baths are open year-round from early morning to late evening.

A visit to Geneva's Old Town neighborhood is a must. Located on the lake's left bank, it's a rich collection of cafes, art galleries, boutiques, and parks, the perfect place to spend a leisurely afternoon mixing with locals.

With easy access to two mountain ranges, a glacial lake at its doorstep, and bike paths that

project out in every direction, Geneva is worthy of the most active traveler's attention. I cycled from Montreux to Geneva, a 60-mile lakefront route that was an ideal way to explore the region. And transporting bikes on the efficient Swiss trains is easy, allowing for one-way journeys. You can rent a bike at Geneva's main station for under \$30 a day.

Just outside the city limits, the banks of Lac Léman rise to accommodate sweeping vineyards that produce some of the country's most flavorful vintages. Tours and tastings can be arranged easily. There are three distinct wine-producing areas surrounding Geneva that host 400 wine growers. The regions combine to produce a rich diversity of varietals, which include Chasselas (the most popular), pinot noir, chardonnay, Gamaret, Riesling-Sylvaner and sauvignon.

The city also boasts more than a dozen Michelin-rated restaurants within a 30-minute drive. Look for ones wearing the “Ambassadeur du terroir Genevois” label on their storefronts. This informs patrons that the food and wines presented are procured lo-

cally, providing an intimate taste of the region's best products.

*Jerry Soverinsky, a freelance writer in Chicago, can be reached at jerryssov@sbeglobal.net.*

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