



## **GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

Geneva is Switzerland's second largest city and, at that, quite compact, logically designed, pocked with abundant shopping and restaurants, and crowded with offices that make it a city of international peace and health initiatives. Given its proximity to France, French is the lingua franca here but English, the international language of business, is spoken just as widely. Tabbed the "City of 1001 Delights," visitors flow through Geneva for business and pleasure, often en route to world class skiing in the Alps, exhilarating road trips through mountain villages or heading to pampered retreats along the shores of iconic Lake Geneva, which flanks the city's northeastern corners. Within those days are rare wines to sample, contraband cheeses to slice, chocolate to savor, haute fashion to spot, jewelry and timepieces to admire and much history to take in through the city's museums and landmarks.

### **LOCATION OF GENEVA**

Geneva, Switzerland lies at the southern tip of expansive Lake Geneva (locally called Lac Léman) that has as its eastern terminus the heady and musical resort town of Montreux. At the foot of the Alps and Jura mountains, Geneva is otherwise connected to France on its other borders and French influence is widespread, from the language to gastronomy, to fashion and culture. The settlement itself dates to years before the Roman occupation in the second century BC. Eventually, it became home of Calvinism and one of Europe's great centers of the Protestant Reformation following centuries as a seat of the Holy Roman Empire. It began its tenure as a place of peace and neutrality as far back as 1533 with pacts that quelled conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in that jurisdiction and allowed every Genevan to openly and freely choose religious affiliation without concern for reprisals.

The international status of the city continued after World War I in 1919 when Geneva became the home of the League of Nations, which eventually became the United Nations.

## **BUSINESS IN GENEVA**

With its history as a neutral location and the headquarters of Europe's United Nations, the "Capital of Peace" that is Geneva eventually attracted world bodies of diplomacy and policy, such as the World Health Organization, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the Aga Khan Foundation, Airports Council International, UN Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières, and highly active UN programs, such as Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It is also an epicenter for the world banking industry, highly regarded for its stalwart policies on banking secrecy and protection. It is estimated that Swiss bankers hold some 25 percent of all global cross-border assets.

## **THINGS TO DO IN GENEVA**

As a city on the Rhone River that dates back to the time of the Caesars, Geneva offers no shortage of landmarks, museums and historical avenues to explore. Most of these attractions inhabit the lively section of Geneva called Old Town or Vielle Ville. Find here an ancient maze of narrow streets and ornate squares that brim with cozy cafés, restaurants, galleries, museums and historical sights. Preserved hand-hewn facades of Gothic, early Romanesque, and Neo-Classical architecture make the wandering worth it between visits to museums and striking landmarks.

Top spots to visit in Old Town include the circa 1150 **Temple de Saint-Pierre**, if only for its distinct Gothic elements. Visitors can climb the 157 steps to the top of one of the two principal towers for some riveting views of the lake and city. Also on the list of quick hits are the **Geneva Water Fountain**, which brings one of the world's tallest fountain sprays at more than 400 feet. There is the **Jardin Anglais** with its famous **Flower Clock** ("Horloge Fleurie") and more than 6,500 blooms along the quay on the south side of the lake known as the Rive Gauche. Also check out the **Place du Bourg-de-Four** as it is believed to be the oldest square in the city, and flowing with charm and ambiance from cafes and shops. It was once the site of the Roman forum and a location for a prominent open market that started in the 9th century. Seven centuries later the location provided shelter and protection for exiled Protestants. A grand fountain built in the 18th-century anchors the square.

While museums are numerous and based mostly on the culture, trade and natural history of the region, among the most notable museums to visit are the **Patek Philippe Museum** that focuses on the history of watches and watchmaking and showcases invaluable company timepieces. Other interesting museums include the **Palais des Nations** and **League of Nations Museum**; and the **Musée d'Art et d'Histoire** with its collections coveted French Impressionist pieces as well as presentations of weapons, Greek and Roman art treasures, Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean antiquities, Roman and Etruscan pottery, and Egyptian funerary art.

For those who want to enjoy the fresh air, a sunset cruise on Lake Geneva is second only to exploring such places as Salève Mountain for hiking just outside the city. Easy day trips into the mountains bring visits to quaint hamlets, and even wine and cheese tasting adventures at such countryside spots as Lavaux vineyards.

## SHOPPING IN GENEVA

While Geneva is not a city for “deals” and budget buys, there are plenty of “finds” to be gathered in the city’s biggest flea market at Plainpalais every Wednesday and Saturday, and the first Sunday of the month.

The streets between Rue du Rhône, Rue du Marché and Rue du Mont Blanc lead to Geneva’s most glamorous and exclusive shopping sites. Rue du Rhône is home away from home for Chanel, Dior, Fendi, Louis Vuitton and Gucci, among other elite brands. And, of course, these iconic presences are complemented by the best of the best in watch and accessories brands such as Omega, Montblanc, Chopard, Bulgari, Cartier and Tiffany.

More popular and accessible items can be shopped along bustling Rue du Marché where trendy names like Hugo Boss, Mango and Benetton line the avenue. The seven-floor department store, Bongénie, is a smart hit for Swiss souvenirs.

## RESTAURANTS IN GENEVA

Geneva’s food scene, while not Paris, is replete with its own Michelin stars and atmospheric dining in grand historic settings. Dieters, Carb-counters, dairy deniers, sugar shamers might not find Geneva to be a comfortable place to dine as the top hits on the menu will likely involve cheese, wine, bread, sausage, potatoes, macaroni and chocolate. In the heart of Geneva’s Old Town a must experience is **Restaurant Les Armures** in the meticulously renovated historic Hôtel Les Armures, which dates back to the 13th century even if presenting a more recent 17th-century, Italian-inspired renovation. The menu remains traditional with Swiss specialties, such as raclette and fondue,

soups, pastas, meat and fish dishes. Michelin watchers will want to try **Bayview** by Chef Michel Roth, who hails from L'Espadon at the Ritz Hotel o Paris. The Bayview is found at the Hotel President Wilson and keeps a minimalist ambiance that makes the most of the dappled sunlight reflected off Lake Geneva just outside. Ingredients here are locally sourced and worked into culinary artforms with dishes that might use French sea snails or Swiss pork sausage, and complemented perfectly by wines of the region.

Another Michelin-starred venue can be found in the city center's Mandarin Oriental Hotel on the banks of the River Rhône. **Rasoï** offers a fine dining twist on Indian cuisine under the direction of UK-based Chef Vineet Bhatia. The award-winning chef runs the only ethnic restaurant in Europe to have been granted two Michelin stars. The Adam Tihany interiors are worth the visit just to ogle. Café du Centre is another historic dining spot, found in an old brewery that was later converted into a grand bistro where all the waiters wearing tuxedos. The top thing to do at the Café du Centre is have Sunday brunch, as few places in Geneva serve this demand. Expect such familiar dishes as blueberry pancakes, French toast with maple syrup, Cumberland sausages, marbled bacon, open sandwich combinations, delicious pastries, even oysters may be on the menu. An open outside patio is delightful for an al fresco meal. The grand United Nations offices can have a peaceful meal. **Restaurant Vieux Bois** is part of the Geneva Hotel School, and is a good place to enjoy a high quality meal at a very reasonable price. Expect to see ambassadors and diplomats dining as the service is excellent, reflecting the high esteem of these services within the 18th-century surroundings. The menu changes every 45 days so that trainee chefs can experiment with imaginative takes on traditional ingredients.

## **AIRPORT AND TRANSPORTATION**

Geneva International Airport (GVA), formally named Genève Aéroport, is located less than three miles northwest of Geneva city center. The airport can be accessed from both France and Switzerland, as its northern flank runs along the Swiss–French border. The airport is served by more than 50 airlines. Direct services are available to some 70 European cities and to intercontinental destinations in India, Thailand, Australia, Brazil, the USA and Canada.

GVA offers direct connected train service that heads to most of Swiss cities as well rail connections that take six minutes to arrive at stations in central Geneva. Train service from key cities throughout Europe makes Geneva ultimately accessible and convenient.