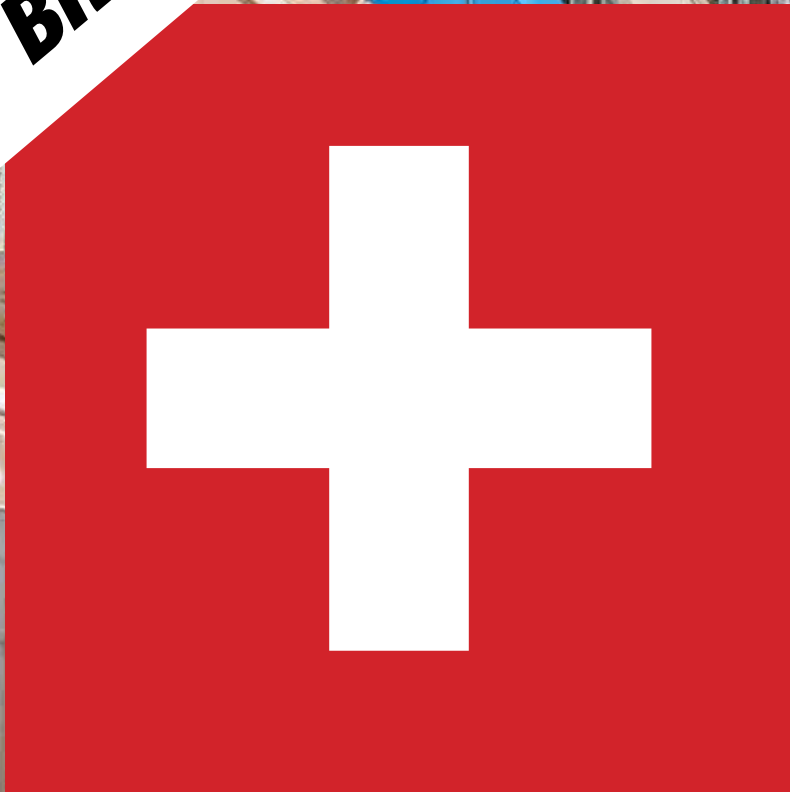


CITY BREAK:



GENEVA





BY KIMBERLEY LOVATO

Geneva has long had a reputation for being a little stuffy and even boring. But as with most hackneyed stereotypes, they usually say more about the out-of-touch title giver than the receiver.

While the Swiss city is deservedly synonymous with luxury watches, posh hotels, chocolate and fondue, and stunning Alpine scenery on the shores of sparkling Lake Geneva (locally Lac Léman), it is also a cosmopolitan mini-metropolis thriving with theater, opera, and dozens of museums and public works of art.

The city's efficient network of trains, buses, trams, and yellow taxi boats called *Mouettes Genevoises* (all free with the city's Geneva Pass) connect eclectic neighborhoods brimming with markets, lakefront swimming holes, historic sites, and a cuisine scene that goes beyond melted cheese.

Boring? Hardly!

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SEE + DO

Wander the maze of cobbled lanes in **Old Town** (*Vieille Ville*), where lingering over *café renversé* — the Swiss version of *café au lait* — in scenic squares, such as the lively **Place du Bourg-de-Four**, is a must. The 12th-century **St. Pierre Cathedral** is close by. Though not nearly as imposing as others in Europe, it's significant for the ancient archaeological remains below the building. Climb the combined 157 steps of the northern and southern towers for views over the city and lake.

Near the oft-photographed **Jet d'Eau** fountain is the **English Garden**, one of the many green spaces that cover one-quarter of Geneva. Here you'll find the famous **Flower Clock**, created with thousands of blooms. Geneva's biggest (and some say most beautiful) park is the lakeside **Parc de la Grange**, with more than 200 varieties of roses, and summer concerts and plays at its two theaters.

The popular **Bains des Pâquis**, a public bathhouse complex on a jetty in the lake, has been around since 1872 and is open year-round for swimmers and sunbathers. Or soar above the city on the **Mont Salève Cable Car**, about 12 miles from the city center, carrying riders up 3,600 feet. The views of Geneva, the Alps, and Mont Blanc (on a clear day) are thrilling, and the area is a playground for mountain biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing.

Go full-on Swiss native by creating your own bespoke watch with specialist **Initium**. Or check out the newest package from the posh **Beau-Rivage Geneva** hotel, where a stay includes a short intro to watchmaking course (or a build-your-own session), plus two tickets to the **Patek Philippe Museum**, a temple to five centuries of horology.

The **International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum** is home to three modern permanent exhibitions (defending human dignity, restoring family links, reducing natural risks), and is one of the city's top attractions.

EAT + DRINK

If you need a good coffee kickstart, and don't mind leaving your laptop behind, settle in at **Birdie**, a cozy café also serving fresh homemade breakfast and lunch. Score a reservation at **Intensus**, and you'll be wowed by 10 sophisticated courses with only eight other diners in a secret location revealed 24 hours in advance.

Flower Clock

Credit: Genève Tourisme



St Pierre Cathedral

Credit: Genève Tourisme



GETTING THERE

UNITED AIRLINES FLIES NONSTOP FROM WASHINGTON DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (IAD) TO GENEVA AIRPORT (GVA). A ONE-WAY FLIGHT TAKES APPROXIMATELY EIGHT HOURS.

Switzerland's first indoor mini-golf and cocktail bar, **Rollers**, opened in 2019 with holes and drinks (Midnight Espresso and the Martini McFly) named for classic films. Cap your night at **Chat Noir** for drinks and jazz. Try the *pavés*, little cubes of melt-in-your-mouth chocolate dusted with cocoa powder created by Geneva chocolate makers in the 1930s. Or indulge your sweet tooth with a visit to **Favarger**, Geneva's first chocolate tasting bar, opened last summer.

The city's largest **farmers market** unfurls in the Plainpalais neighborhood on Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday mornings and is rife with stalls of local meats, honey, and cheese, as well as prepared foods from around the world. For a tried-and-true classic, eat steak-frites at **Chez Boubier Café de Paris**, an institution known for its eponymous waist-expanding condiment — a butter-based sauce for the beef.

SHOP + STROLL

Test your credit card's mettle on **Rue du Rhone**, strung like diamonds with haute couture fashion and watch boutiques such as Louis Vuitton, Dior, Chanel, Chopard, Bulgari, Omega, and Patek Philippe.

For more modest bric-à-brac browsing, head to the large **flea market** held Wednesday and Saturday, and every first Sunday of the month, in the Plainpalais neighborhood.

Once its own town, the neighborhood of **Carouge**, with its Italianate good looks and bohemian vibes, was modeled after the city of Nice, France. Stroll Rue Ancienne and its orbiting streets to dip into independent boutiques and antique shops.