

Geneva

Cultural Trails

Museum to museum

Old Town

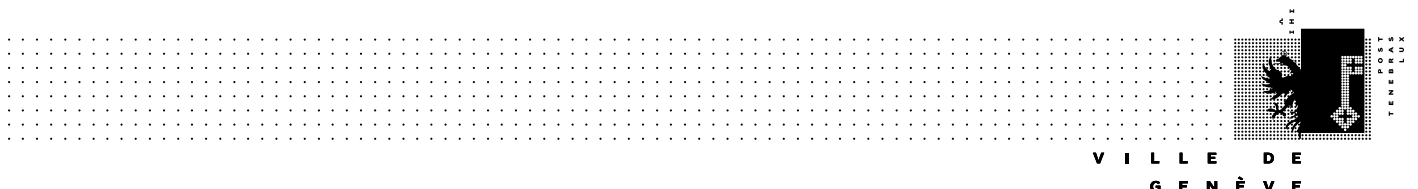


The fortified hill of the Old Town – the highest point of the city of Geneva – has been inhabited since the days of the Celtic tribe of the Allobroges and the Roman Empire. Geneva's historic centre, also known as the *Cité* or *Ville haute* (Upper Town), chronicles 2000 years of history and reflects the economic, political and religious development of this lakeside city over the centuries. This Cultural Trail leads you over the cobblestones of the ancient streets that link St Peter's Cathedral, the International Museum of the Reformation, the Town Hall – seat of cantonal and municipal political life for over 500 years –, the Maison Tavel, the distinguished 18th century townhouses of Rue des Granges, the house in which Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born and the very ancient square of Bourg-de-Four, where people still love to linger after all these years.

Walking the trail should take 50 minutes, not including museum visits.
We suggest an itinerary, but you can join the trail at any stage.



You can access the audio files of this Cultural Trail on:
geneve.ch/cultural-trails or by downloading the *Sentiers Culturels* app
for free on AppStore or GooglePlay



The Trail in Geneva





Archaeological Site of the Cathedral

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In 1976, large-scale excavations were launched underneath St. Peter's Cathedral and its vicinity. Led by Charles Bonnet, the cantonal archaeologist at the time, the excavations here lasted for almost 30 years and brought to light the remains of churches that predated today's cathedral, as well as traces of pre-Christian occupation.

This internationally renowned archaeological site, which first opened to the public in 1986 and then in its present version in 2006, is one of the most extensive in Europe. Here, you'll discover how the City of Geneva came into being, learn about its history from the Celtic period to the Middle Ages and find out how Christianity became established in the region. Through 3D simulations, interactive terminals, models and drawings retracing key moments in Geneva's history, you can experience the daily

life of inhabitants during the time of the Allobroges, the Romans and medieval Christians.

The oldest archaeological remains on the hill (though this area was undoubtedly occupied even earlier), date back to the 2nd century BC and indicate an Allobrogian settlement. These first traces include a square, a temple, an aristocratic house, a potters' workshop and a religious area protected by a palisade. The decision to settle here was no mere coincidence.

The presence of the lake and the Rhone offers a dual benefit: they are not only navigable waterways but also form a natural protection around the hill where St. Peter's Cathedral now stands, hence the construction of the citadel on its summit. However, it was not until the end of the 4th century AD, with the promulgation of Christianity as a state religion within the

Roman Empire, that the city accorded itself an impressive monumental complex. Initially, it comprised a cathedral, a baptistery for conversions and a chapel. Around 400 AD, a second cathedral was erected on the southern side, linked to the first by an atrium whose galleries facilitated movement between the different edifices. Several meeting rooms, some heated and richly decorated, enabled ecclesiastics to convene and to welcome important visitors. Over the years, all these buildings, together with the Bishop of Geneva's residence and private chapel, were altered, embellished and often extended. A third cathedral was later constructed on the site of the baptistery; it formed the basis of the one built in 1000 AD, which subsequently made way for today's single cathedral in the second half of the 12th century.

a The Cathedral

St. Peter's Cathedral, long before it became the symbol of the influence of Protestant Rome, was initiated in 1160 by the first Prince-Bishop of Geneva, Arducius de Faucigny, and its construction took over a century to complete. In June 1535, after Catholic mass had been abolished in Geneva, the cathedral became a place of Protestant worship and was renamed St. Peter's Temple. Of modest proportions, it owes its current appearance to additions, modifications and major restoration work in the 18th and 19th centuries. The monumental façade, with its Neoclassical portico inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, dates from the 1750s. Comprising six Corinthian marble columns surmounted by a pediment bearing the coat of arms of Geneva and by a dome, it was the work of Benedetto Alfieri, architect to the Duke of Savoy.

The copper spire that gives the cathedral its slender silhouette was added in 1895. Inside, most of the sacred images and rich decoration of the Middle Ages were lost during the Reformation's iconoclastic movement, leaving behind bare, whitewashed walls of molasse stone. Its extreme sobriety reflects the Calvinist spirit, focused on listening to the Word rather than on images. Only the 300 Roman and Gothic style capitals (the largest set in Switzerland) and the stained glass windows have survived, together with one panel from Konrad Witz's altarpiece, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (1444). This major artwork, now at the Museum of Art and History (MAH), is the first example in European painting of the depiction of a real landscape (in this case, Lake Geneva and the Mont Blanc mountain chain).

One of the cathedral's gems is found on its south side: the Chapel of the Maccabees. Built between 1400 and 1405 by the Cardinal Jean de Brogny as a family tomb, it was converted during the Reformation into a salt warehouse and later used as an auditorium by the Reformed Academy. Major restoration work in the 19th century gave it back its brilliance and colour and permitted the removal for conservation purposes of Giacomo Jaquerio's fresco painted on

the vault of the apse. This celestial concert with twelve angels can also now be seen at the MAH.

Over the centuries, the cathedral has been more than just a place of worship. It is the heart of the city and has notably performed civil functions, even becoming the "Temple of Law" during the Genevan Revolution. Still today, it hosts the swearing-in ceremony for the government of the Republic of Geneva.



4 Rue du Cloître, Cour de Saint-Pierre

International Museum of the Reformation (MIR)

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e-mail info@mir.ch

web mir.ch

Open Tuesday to Sunday

10AM – 5PM

Admission: adults 13 CHF



Created in 2005, the MIR showcases the living history of Geneva and the Protestant Reformation. Through many archival documents and a wealth of illustrations, the non-denominational MIR tells in detail the story of the Reformation from its origins to the present day.

It all began in the 16th century. Adopted by vote on 21 May 1536, in the cathedral cloister, on the exact spot where the MIR stands today, the Reformation had a decisive influence on Geneva's destiny. For, at the same time as carrying out its

reforms, Geneva was also carrying out a revolution, breaking away from its legitimate sovereign, the Prince-Bishop, to become an independent republic. The man who shaped this new republic, then under threat from the nearby Duchy of Savoy, was the 27 year-old John Calvin, close to William Farel, the first to have preached evangelical doctrines in the city. Geneva thus became a centre for western Christianity and a place of refuge for thousands of families persecuted for their faith. These refugees were to make a lasting mark on the city and some street names still reflect their presence: de Candolle, Trembley, Turretini, Micheli and Fatio.

The museum is housed in a 400m² apartment on the ground floor of the Maison Mallet, dating from the 1720s. The decoration of the library, dining room and sitting room has been restored to that of the day. The 18th century was a golden era for Geneva: the threat at its borders disappeared, former refugees prospered and many fine residences were constructed. In order to enhance the cathedral forecourt, the Council of Geneva offered plots of land to individuals for the building of houses there. Gédéon Mallet, a descendant of a Huguenot family, wool merchant and later banker in Geneva and Paris, commis-

sioned plans from the French architect Jean-François Blondel for a large family house (the couple had nine children). The style adopted is in keeping with that of the "French style" mansions then being erected in the Rue des Granges. On passing through the porch, a surprising facade awaits you, with its curved corners and large bay windows.

A three-storied avant-corps is topped by a pediment bearing the Mallet coat of arms. The "garden" facade, which actually overlooks a public square, is characterised by strong horizontal lines. At its centre, superimposed central pilasters support a light pediment.

The high quality of the sculpted decoration imparts great elegance to the entire edifice, which fostered debate in Geneva on luxury in architecture.

b Terrasse Agrippa-d'Aubigné

Walking round the back of the cathedral, you come to a charming terrace on two levels offering a clear view over the Rues-Basses (Low Town) below and the east face of the cathedral. Until 1940, a prison stood here, erected in 1840 on the former site of the residence of the Prince-Bishops of Geneva, which had itself become a place of incarceration with the Reformation. Stones from the bishops' palace prison were used to build the supporting walls of the terrace, which actually conceals one of the city's air raid shelters. This space was recently transformed into L'Abri, a multicultural centre for young talents.

The terrace is named in honour of Agrippa d'Aubigné, a famous French Protestant writer and soldier, who spent the last ten years of his life in Geneva and was buried in 1630 in the cathe-

dral cloister. Ever since childhood, Agrippa d'Aubigné had been deeply affected by the tragedy of wars of religion. He was only eight when his father, a Protestant and a soldier, showed him the heads of his fellow executed Reformers. Narrowly escaping the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, D'Aubigné retained a deep-seated grudge against the monarchy; resentment reinforced by a sense of betrayal when Henry IV, his companion in arms, converted to Catholicism. As well as a soldier, D'Aubigné was also a writer and one of the great Baroque authors of France. He wrote many anti-Catholic pamphlets and controversial attacks against former Protestants, as in his most important work *Les Tragiques*. Exiled to Geneva in 1620, he occupied until his death the seat reserved for him in the front row of St. Peter's Cathedral.

c Collège Calvin

Along the medieval fortifications was established the first major public institution in Geneva created after the Reformation: the Collège de Genève. Founded in 1559 by John Calvin, it became a listed building in 1921. The Academy, headed by Theodore Beza, included an elementary and a secondary school and the University of Geneva, and offered teaching in literature, biblical languages, law and theology based on Calvin's Catechism. The college was free and open to young people from all backgrounds. In the 16th century, it had 1200 students out of a population of 13,000. Sciences were added to the curriculum in the 17th century and modern foreign languages in the 19th century. The Collège de Genève was renamed Collège Calvin in 1969, when co-education was introduced in schools.

Building work began in January 1558, led by Pernet Desfosses. Under his supervision, it was completed so rapidly that lessons

began in November of the same year. Of its original form, the college has retained its overall layout and its double flight staircase resting on a portico with three semi-circular arches and two unequal round arches. This Renaissance style edifice has cross-ribbed vaulting that is a continuation of the medieval tradition. In 1560, the second building (south wing) was constructed, with proportions practically identical to the first. Accessible via an external staircase, the entrance is enhanced by pilasters and a sculpted pediment bearing the coat of arms of Geneva, as well as two figures of Victory and various Renaissance motifs not found elsewhere in the city. Heightening, additions and extensions were carried out in the 19th century in response to the new requirements of such an establishment, which has taught such famous students as Henry Dunant (founder of the Red Cross), the writer Jorge Luis Borges and the Swiss actor Michel Simon.



Clémentine, Heinz Schwarz (1974-1975)

Installed at the turning to the Bourg-de-Four by the City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund in 1974, *Clémentine*, by the Swiss artist Heinz Schwarz, is without doubt Geneva's most popular statue. It has also become a symbol of the struggle against brutality and indifference, in the light of the many flowers, press cuttings and political texts around it. Born in the Canton of Solothurn, lithographer by trade and self-taught sculptor, Heinz Schwarz came to Geneva during the Second World War. His first statues were of classical inspiration, in which the influences of Renoir and Maillol can be seen. He gradually developed his own personal style and cultivated his taste for elongated forms. Distanced from the contemporary art scene, Schwarz drew on his own sensitivities and worked tirelessly on the affirmation of the slender simplicity that the nudity of adolescence, that in-between age, evoked for him. *Clémentine*, with her almost diaphanous nudity, discreetly and poetically embellishes the urban landscape. Her barely visible base reinforces the simplicity of her attitude and the candour of the post-childhood period. This sculpture, first made in plaster and then cast in bronze, was created after a model that the artist reworked to give it a timeless and universal character, with forms more slender and larger than in real life. It is to the same artist that we owe *L'Enfant et le cheval* (*The Child and the Horse*) at the end of the Quai Wilson.



Twisted Column, Max Bill (1966)

Two years before *Clémentine* and further down the slope, the square became home to a work by Max Bill. Acquired after the retrospective exhibition at the Musée Rath devoted to this Swiss artist of international renown, this twisted granite column measuring 4.2 metres high reinvents the columns of Antiquity by disregarding the most rational geometric calculations. With a circular base and summit, the starting triangle becomes an octagon as it turns and climbs the bole of the column. The change is barely perceptible at first, yet the constant progression of this triangle turned octagon gives dynamism and lightness to this imposing sculpture. Born in Winterthur in 1908, the young Max Bill was impressed by a lecture he attended given by Le Corbusier. At 19, he began architectural studies at the Bauhaus in Dessau and subsequently tried his hand at drawing, painting and sculpture. Also an editor and theorist, his manifesto for Constructive Art published in 1936 made him one of the flag bearers for concrete art, advocating the use of natural sciences and mathematics in the construction of artworks. Composed of pure geometric forms, Max Bill's artistic world is striking for its unity and the constancy of his research spanning sixty years of artistic activity.



d Place du Bourg-de-Four

A favourite with Geneva's residents, the Place du Bourg-de-Four is the oldest square in the city. Its Roman name of forum (hence "four" in French), indicating strong economic activity, became Bourg-de-Four when the square incorporated neighbouring buildings to become a district or "bourg". Set on a slope between the plateau of the Tranchées area and the summit of the hill, it is a true crossroads where roads leading to Geneva converge.

In the 3rd century AD, the city wall built to protect Geneva from possible incursions by Germanic tribes left the Bourg-de-Four isolated outside the ramparts. It was not until the extension of the urban belt in the 9th century and the development of merchants' workshops that new life was breathed into the square, culminating in the 13th century international fairs. These commercial and festive occasions, lasting several days and held each year during religious festivals, attracted crowds from all regions. Hostelries and inns then stood in the Place du Bourg-de-Four.

The creation of market halls in the Place du Molard in 1309 and increasing competition from fairs in Lyon in the following century put an end to this flurry of activity. The new 16th century fortifications closed the gates of the city and turned the Bourg-de-Four into a cul-de-sac. The square was no longer an intersection, but still kept its mercantile function. The fountain in the centre dates from this period, as does much of the heightening of the constructions, the consequence of the influx of Protestant refugees from around Europe.

Listed in 1929, the square retains its function as a crossroads and invites you to take a welcome break halfway up the steep slope leading to the Old Town. Look out for the small statue of the King of the Burgundians, Gundobad (died 516 AD), nestled in the facade of No. 5, a reminder that his castle once stood on the approach to this square.



e The Hôtel de Ville and public authorities

This architectural complex, built in several phases between the 15th and 18th centuries, has been the permanent seat of political power in Geneva since the late Middle Ages. Until the 15th century, the local authorities had no meeting room of their own, but convened in the cathedral cloister. Around 1410-20, the Commune purchased a piece of land intended for the first City Hall. Some years later, a large mural tower, known as the Tour Baudet, was built. Rectangular in form and set solidly on the summit of the hill known as the Treille, it was both a defensive structure and used for council sessions. Since the Genevan constitution of 1847, the seven State Councillors have been elected by universal suffrage, and still meet today at the Tour Baudet once a week in a room with richly painted decoration depicting 23 full-length figures dating from the 16th and 17th centuries.

In the 16th century, major extension work was undertaken, notably the construction of the monumental spiral ramp. The only one of its kind and designed by Pernet Defosses, the architect of the Collège Calvin, it forms three complete turns within a square space, with no stairs or intermediate landings. The finely moulded decoration on the Gothic cross-ribbed vaulting is already in the Renaissance style. The street and Treille facades were built between 1616 and 1710, linking the Renaissance and

classical styles "in the French manner". They are aligned with the existing houses in the street, in particular the Turrettini house at No. 8, whose strong horizontal lines and terrace decoration have been copied. The different floor levels are underlined by projecting cornices, while the identical square-shaped windows rest on soberly decorated sills. The inner facades overlook a large courtyard whose galleries have cross-ribbed vaulted ceilings. Dozens of encrusted fossils can be spotted in the pinkish rendering of the courtyard walls. These gastropods, dating from some 150 million years ago are often to be found in Geneva's buildings, encrusted in the limestone blocks of the region, reminding us that in the Mesozoic era the entire Lake Geneva basin was covered by sea.

From the long stone bench on the pavement outside the Hôtel de Ville, judges dispensed justice until 1829. The accused and witnesses were installed on a platform facing the public tribunal. Condemned to death here were Jacques Gruet for blasphemy (1547) and Michael Servetus for heresy (1553). On this very spot in 1762, *Émile* and *The Social Contract*, two major works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau were condemned and burnt by the court. Due to lack of space, the law court and tribunals left the Hôtel de Ville in 1860 and were transferred to the Bourg-de-Four in the former general hospital.



Maison Tavel



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Open Tuesday to Sunday
11AM – 6PM
Admission: see website

A remarkable example of medieval civil architecture in Switzerland, this exceptional building is also the oldest residential building in Geneva. The property of the City of Geneva since 1963, it became a local history museum in 1986. On its six floors you can see engravings, paintings, maps, models, furniture and other objects dating from the Middle Ages to the 19th century that reveal the urban development of the city, as well as different aspects of the lives of its inhabitants in times past. The attic is devoted to the Magnin scale model of the city, named after the Genevan architect Auguste Magnin, who spent almost 20 years of his life making it. This 30m² scale model gives us a highly accurate and faithful record of Geneva in 1850, still surrounded by its system of fortifications. The museum also organises temporary thematic exhibitions.

The oldest part of the house, the vast converted cellars in the basement, dates from the 11th and 12th centuries. From the late 13th century onwards, the house was owned by the seigniorial Tavel family. In 1334, a huge fire destroyed half the city. Shortly after, the Tavel family rebuilt their home and gave it the appearance of a fortified house by adding two corner towers. This truly palatial city dwelling was considered the most beautiful residence of its day in Geneva. At this time, in the mid-14th century, the Tavels' political and social roles made them one of the most important families within episcopal Geneva, especially due to their key participation in the struggle for emancipation from the authority of the bishop and for the constitution of the Commune.

Major structural modifications were carried out in the 17th century by the house's new owners, the Calandrini family, rich Italian Protestant refugees who erected a mansion on the Grand-Rue side. To preserve the Tavels' house and incorporate it into their new mansion, a staircase was constructed in the courtyard between the two buildings. Unlike most medieval houses, which were very narrow, the generous proportions and the seigniorial character of the residence permitted transformations in line with the aristocratic and bourgeois housing tastes of subsequent centuries, while retaining the original structure. The main facade, now with only one tower, is dark grey with white pointing, reproducing the 17th century external lime-based paint discovered during restoration work in the 1980s. Many windows were added up until the 18th century, though still respecting the medieval polychrome sculptures of the large first floor windows. This series of ten heads dates from the 14th century and very probably tells a story whose meaning is a mystery to us today. On the top row is the bust of a bearded man, the crowned head of a man and the heads of two women, one wearing a diadem and the other a crown. Beneath, two dogs can be seen on either side of the outlandish head of a man and the head of a woman covered with a veil and a bridal crown. Lastly, the bust of a woman is turned towards the remains of what was probably a griffin. Between 1544 and 1555, an inn was housed in the Maison Tavel, known as the "Griffin Inn" in reference to this mythical animal, half eagle, half lion. The originals of these ten sculpted heads, removed in 2006 for their preservation, can be viewed inside the museum.

f The Old Arsenal

Well-known for its old cannons intended to defend the Republic of Geneva against the territorial ambitions of France and the Duchy of Savoy, the Old Arsenal was originally an open-air market and became a covered market hall in the early 15th century. In the 1630s, a large granary was added above the hall, and a century later weapons replaced the bales of wheat. In 1877, this arsenal was moved to the Plainpalais barracks and the building fell into disuse. It was briefly a “Historical Museum” where old weapons were exhibited, until these were transferred in 1910 to the brand new Museum of Art and History. In 1923, it became a depository for the State Archives and now houses this institution. Its changing functions have not however modified its external

appearance, which retains the characteristic architecture of a covered market topped with a granary. The ground floor is open on three sides, with wide arches resting on square-shaped pillars. The mullioned windows on the first floor take up the decoration of projecting sills of the Hôtel de Ville. Under the cornice, a frieze dating from 1972, which reproduces a painting of 1893 destroyed by fire, illustrates important events in Geneva’s history. The mosaics covering the inner wall of the covered area date from 1949 and are the work of Alexandre Cingria. Originally intended to decorate one of the walls of the Hôtel de Ville, they depict the arrival of Julius Caesar in Geneva in 58 BC, the medieval Geneva Fairs and the arrival of Protestant refugees after the Reformation.



40 Grand-Rue

Maison Rousseau et Littérature

tel +41 22 310 10 28
Web m-r-l.ch

Open from Tuesday to
Sunday: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Closed on Mondays
Literary events in the evenings
and in the middle of the day

Admission:

Full price: CHF 7
Students, senior citizens,
people on disability allowance
(AI in Switzerland), job seekers: CHF 5
Groups of 10 people: CHF 5 per person
Free for children (0-12 years),
disabled visitors and accompanying
adults, and pupils and teachers
from Geneva’s Département de
l’Instruction Publique (DIP)



At number 40 Grand-Rue, you’ll find the birthplace of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Today, this six-storey building is dedicated to literature from Switzerland, French-speaking Switzerland, francophone countries, and the entire world. And it keeps alive the works of this humanist philosopher, writer and musician of the Age of Enlightenment.

Created in 2012, the Maison Rousseau et Littérature (MRL) is a place for meetings and debates that is open to writers, translators and readers of all ages and from all backgrounds, as well as school-children, students, artists and thinkers. As the leading literary institution in French-speaking Switzerland, the MRL offers a multidisciplinary programme of

events, including readings, round-table discussions, meetings with Swiss and international authors, exhibitions and writing workshops. Since reopening in 2021, after two years of renovations, the MRL has developed its cultural project over six storeys. From the ground floor to the top floor, it welcomes both the general public and professionals from the world of literature in the best way possible.

On the ground floor, a literary café marks the entrance into the MRL. On the first floor, visitors can take an audio-visual tour that traces the unique career of the famous “Citizen of Geneva” – who was not just a philosopher, but also a writer, musician and botanist. Meetings,

debates and workshops focused on the philosopher’s works and thoughts are organised in different rooms. And finally, on the top floor, there are three studio flats that provide accommodation for residencies by artists and scholars. In addition to its regular events, the MRL organises several festivals, such as “Ecrire POUR CONTRE AVEC” (Write FOR, AGAINST, WITH), or the two-yearly “La Fureur de lire” (Passionate about reading). The latter features a whole series of original and unusual literary events, open and free to all, in partnership with the Cercle de la Librairie et de l’Edition Genève (a non-profit that brings together various professions related to books and publishing) and Geneva City Libraries.

g Rue des Granges

This street that runs along the crest of the hill of the Old Town is still home to prestigious addresses today. Between the late 17th century and the first decades of the 18th century, Geneva witnessed a period of major urban and architectural development. The Rue des Granges housing development, built in a medieval district where barns and stables formerly stood, is a row of luxury mansions with courtyard and garden that reflects the ambitious modern aesthetic movement of the time. The harmonious architectural ensemble of the first three mansions (Nos. 2, 4 and 6) was a project by the architect Jean-Jacques Dufour,

created for Jean Sellon and his brothers-in-law Pierre and Gaspard Boissier. Constructed between 1720 and 1723 in an identical U-shape, these fine residences were a radical departure from the traditional bourgeois house aligned with the street. Each has a gated entrance, an inner courtyard, a main building and side wings of equal height and a terrace. Like the other even numbered houses in the street, these mansions meet the requirements of 18th century classical aesthetics, with strict proportions and simple, pared down decoration, and resemble those appearing at the same time in major French cities.



2 Rue des Granges

Tatiana Zoubov Museum

tel **+41 22 388 40 47**
e-mail **laurence.leroy@etat.ge.ch**
web **zoubov.ge.ch**
Guided tours on Mondays at 5 p.m. and Wednesdays at 6 p.m. (adults) and on some Wednesdays at 3.30 p.m. or 4.30 p.m. (activities for children/families, see the **zoubov.ge.ch** website for more information).
Group tours available on request (by email).

Admission:
Adults – CHF 10
Senior citizens, job seekers and people on disability allowance (AI in Switzerland) – CHF 8
Free for children up to 18 years old

The Sellon mansion is one of the most stunning residences built in Geneva's old town in the 18th century. It was based on the architectural style "between a courtyard and a garden" and declared a historical monument in 1923. For over 230 years, the mansion belonged to the Sellon family, before being acquired by the State of Geneva in 1955.

Countess Zoubov chose the ground floor to showcase the collection she had built at the start of the 20th century – a collection centred around the arts and decorative traditions popular in the major European courts during the Age of Enlightenment. In the second half of the 1950s, she furnished a series of rooms so that visitors could step back in time as they went from one to the next.

In 1959, Rosario Julia Zoubov, born in Argentina in 1892, donated her collection to the State of Geneva. She wanted it to honour the memory of her daughter,

Tatiana, who had died tragically. The collector spent much of her childhood in Geneva, and her second husband, the Count Serge Zoubov, was the father of Tatiana. She had gathered some 500 items of art (paintings, Chinese enamels, applied arts, and 18th century French furniture), some of which relate to Catherine the Great of Russia and those around her.

There is a very unique atmosphere in these rooms, which are used today for official receptions for the Genevan gov-

ernment. Guided tours and private visits can also be organised for those wishing to explore the gems of Geneva's old town. Visitors can discover a place steeped in memories, hidden behind the doorway of number 2, Rue des Granges, and admire the mansion's magnificent façade adorned with mascarons, visible from the Place de Neuve square. The additional south wing, as well as the unexpected monument to Jean Calvin, erected by Count Jean-Jacques de Sellon in the 19th century, are just some of the surprises this building has in store.



h Grand-Rue and Maison Pictet

The Grand-Rue owes its name to the fact that it was the city's main thoroughfare in the Middle Ages, used by carriages of all kinds. Although Nos. 6 and 8 are the vestiges of 15th and 16th century medieval houses, the other constructions show the influence of the Renaissance and the Classicism of the two subsequent centuries, when Geneva enjoyed very strong urban growth. Standing at 15 Grand-Rue, the Maison Pictet was built between 1690 and 1693 by the master builder Abraham Calame on behalf of Jacques Pictet, a high-ranking civic official. Pictet was also a general in the artillery from 1686 to 1721, and his coat of arms decorates one of the cannons (known as the "Monkey") that you can see under the vaults of the Old Arsenal.

To build this 17th century masterpiece of a house, Calame combined four narrow medieval plots behind a single facade. The staircase tower, the mullioned windows and the ironwork are all architectural and decorative elements that reflect the owner's social standing. The most remarkable part, and also the most visible as right on the street, is the gated entrance. Flanked by pilasters supporting an entablature, this gateway frames a door whose richly carved decoration admirably illustrates the sophisticated carpentry of this period.



10 Rue Jean-Calvin

Barbier-Mueller Museum



tel +41 22 312 02 70
e-mail musee@barbier-mueller.ch
web barbier-mueller.ch
Open daily 11AM – 5PM
Admission Fees: adults CHF 8;
senior citizens, students,
jobseekers, those receiving a
disability allowance and groups
CHF 5; free admission for
under 12 y.o. and for members
of the ICOM and the AMBM.

The small Rue Calvin, with its uniform row of 18th century buildings with walls of exposed molasse stone, owes its name to the fact that the great Reformer lived here until his death in 1564. Opposite a commemorative plaque at No. 10 is a sign bearing the stylised head of a buffalo, marking the entrance to the Barbier-Mueller museum. This private collection of non-occidental arts, begun in 1907 by Josef Mueller and continued by his son-in-law Jean Paul Barbier-Mueller, is the largest in the world. On public display since 1977, three months after the death of Josef Mueller, it now contains almost 7000 artworks, sculptures, masks, textiles, prestige objects and body ornaments from Africa, Oceania, the Americas (pre- and post-Colombian), Asia and Maritime Southeast Asia, as well as pieces that date from ancient periods of the great civilisations of Antiquity.

Josef Mueller was born in 1887 into a bourgeois family in the Canton of Solothurn. Orphaned at the age of 6, he was brought up by a governess and paid frequent visits to the parents of a classmate, both lovers of modern painting, who, in 1906, already owned a painting from Picasso's rose period. Just after the First World War, Josef Mueller moved to Paris, and on the advice of dealers, began his collection of modern canvases. At the time, many modern artists and collectors were interested in early African "fetishes" and the little-known non-occidental arts. The young Mueller developed a passion for these in his turn and assembled an unrivalled collection of them. In 1957, on his return to Solothurn, he perceived the need to exhibit his treasures in a museum to remedy the lack of consideration given to this art, held in much lower esteem than the

paintings of western masters. It was probably at this point that the idea of a permanent museum of primitive art was born, which saw the light of day 20 years later in Geneva, where his daughter Monique and son-in-law Jean Paul Barbier-Mueller lived. The latter has also built up a collection that complements that of Josef Mueller and has given the museum's holdings additional coherence.

Although the collections cannot be displayed in their entirety due to lack of space, the museum organises two temporary exhibitions each year to spotlight a thematic in a dialogue with artists' contemporary art works selection of objects that are shown to the public. It has also set up an image and databank of the ritual practices of peoples without written traditions in the world, and so contributes to the preservation of their history.



Streets That Tell Stories

The buildings in the Old Town date for the most part from the 18th and 19th centuries, but the street pattern can largely be traced back to the Middle Ages, like the names of the streets themselves. Although today many of them have been renamed in honour of an important figure, several old ones have still survived. This is the case for some of the streets along this Trail: the ones with names like **Chaudronniers**, **Taconnerie**, **Boulangerie**, **Pélisserie** and **Grand-Mézel** all speak of trades that were the lifeblood of the city.

The study of historical documents and archaeological excavations sometimes provide answers to the origins of these street names. The present-day Rue des **Chaudronniers** refers to the coppersmiths who made cauldrons and other cooking pots there. The siting of their shops was strictly controlled due to the noise they generated and the fire risk associated with their work. The Rue de la **Boulangerie** owes its name to the presence there in the 13th century of the bishop's oven and bakery. The Rue de la **Pélisserie** (alluding to the market where leather and hides were sold) had a tannery, and the furriers were some of the richest traders in the city at the time.

The Place du **Grand-Mézel** derives its name from the Latin *macellum*, meaning butcher's shop. Here, butchers' stalls were to be found, as well as an abattoir and a place for skinning. The name has endured even though the butchers were moved several times from one end to another of the southern side of the High Town because of the insoluble problems of odours and refuse, which brought down property values wherever they were installed. The origin of the name Place de la Taconnerie remains a mystery. After being known as Place de la Fromagerie due to the cheese market located next to St. Peter's Cathedral, and Rue du Marché-au-Blé, after the grain market that once stood there, its current name might date back to the 16th century and refer to "*tacon*", or the leather used by the shoemakers established there.

Practical Information

Finding the Trail

Public Transport

Bus 36, stops Bourg-de-Four, Taconnerie, Cathédrale and Hôtel-de-Ville; buses 3 and 5, stop Palais Eynard; bus 7, stops Bel-Air Cité, Molard and Musée d'art et d'histoire; tram 12, buses 2 and 10, stops Bel-Air Cité and Molard

Information correct as at October 2022

For further information: www.tpg.ch

Bicycle Parking

Bel-Air Cité, Rue Henri-Fazy,
Place du Bourg-de-Four

Bicycles are allowed through all the Old Town and there is very little car traffic, but walking is recommended, as distances are short and cobblestones are everywhere.

Car Parks

Parking Saint-Antoine

People with Reduced Mobility

Full details of access to buildings on the trail can be found on the website:

www.accessibilite.ch

On Site

Wi-Fi

Place du Bourg-de-Four, cour de Saint-Pierre 2 (Hôtel de Ville)

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