

Geneva

Cultural Trails

Museum to Museum

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Tranchées



VILLE DE
GENÈVE



Museum of Art and History



Gallery of Graphic Art of the Museum of Art and History



Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Art



Natural History Museum



Henry Moore, *Reclining Figure: Arch leg*, 1969-1970

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Promenade de l'Observatoire



Albert Gaeng, *Contrepoint and fugue*, 1972-1974

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
École des Contamines



Serge Candolfi, *Untitled*, 1974-1975

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
École des Contamines



Gabriel Stanulis, *Untitled*, 1971

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
École de Roches



Johan Josef Heeb, *Clepsydra or Dream in A flat*, 1975-1976

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Parc de Malagnou



Robert Hainard, *Marmot*, 1964

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Parc de Malagnou



Robert Hainard, *Grey Heron*, circa 1970

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Parc de Malagnou



Paul Bianchi, *Bas-relief*, 1969-1973

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Parc de Malagnou



Paul Bianchi, *Seated Leopard*, 1961-1963

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Parc de Malagnou



Yvan-Louis Larsen, *Barn Owl*, 1963-1970

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Parc de Malagnou



Yvan-Louis Larsen, *Anteater*, 1960-1969

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Parc de Malagnou



Louis Gallet, *Gorilla*, 1945-1984

City of Geneva Contemporary Art Fund
Parc de Malagnou



Luc Jaggi, *Bull*, 1947

Parc de Malagnou



Laurent de Pury, 2004

Place Sturm

Public transport

Tram 12, stops Villereuse and Rive; Buses 3 and 7, stops Musée d'art et d'histoire, Rive and Athénée; Bus 1 stops Tranchées, Muséum, Florissant and Athénée; Bus 8, stops Florissant, Tranchées, Rive and Muséum; Buses 5 and 25, stop Muséum; Bus 5, stops Florissant and Athénée; Bus 36, stops Église Russe, Petit-Palais, Rive and Franz-Liszt; Buses 2, 6, 10, 33, A, E, G, stop Rive
As at July 2014

For more information: tpg.ch

Bicycle parking

Rue Charles-Galland in front of the Museum of Art and History; Malagnou Park, in front of the National History Museum

Car parks

Saint-Antoine car park, entrance on Boulevard Jaques-Dalcroze; Villereuse car park, entrances Rue de la Terrassière and Rue de Villereuse

Wifi

Library of Art and Archaeology of the Museum of Art and History, 5 Promenade du Pin; Promenade de l'Observatoire; Promenade Saint-Antoine; Museum of Art and History

Places to eat

Cafeteria of the Natural History Museum; Le Barocco restaurant of the Museum of Art and History

Persons with reduced mobility

Full details of access to the buildings can be found on the website: accessibilite.ch

Duration

The trail lasts 45 minutes, not including museum visits.

Public holidays

(see museum opening times for more information)

25 December, 1 January, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day, Whit Monday, 1 August, *Jeûne genevois* (1st Thursday in September)

Free admission

Admission to most of the museums is free on the 1st Sunday of the month
Free admission anytime for the Museum of Natural History

An itinerary is suggested, but the trail can be joined at any stage.



Museums



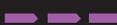
City of Geneva Museums



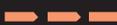
Bicycle parking



Car park



Proposed itinerary



Alternative itinerary



Dedicated cycle paths



Audio-guided tour



Wifi



WC



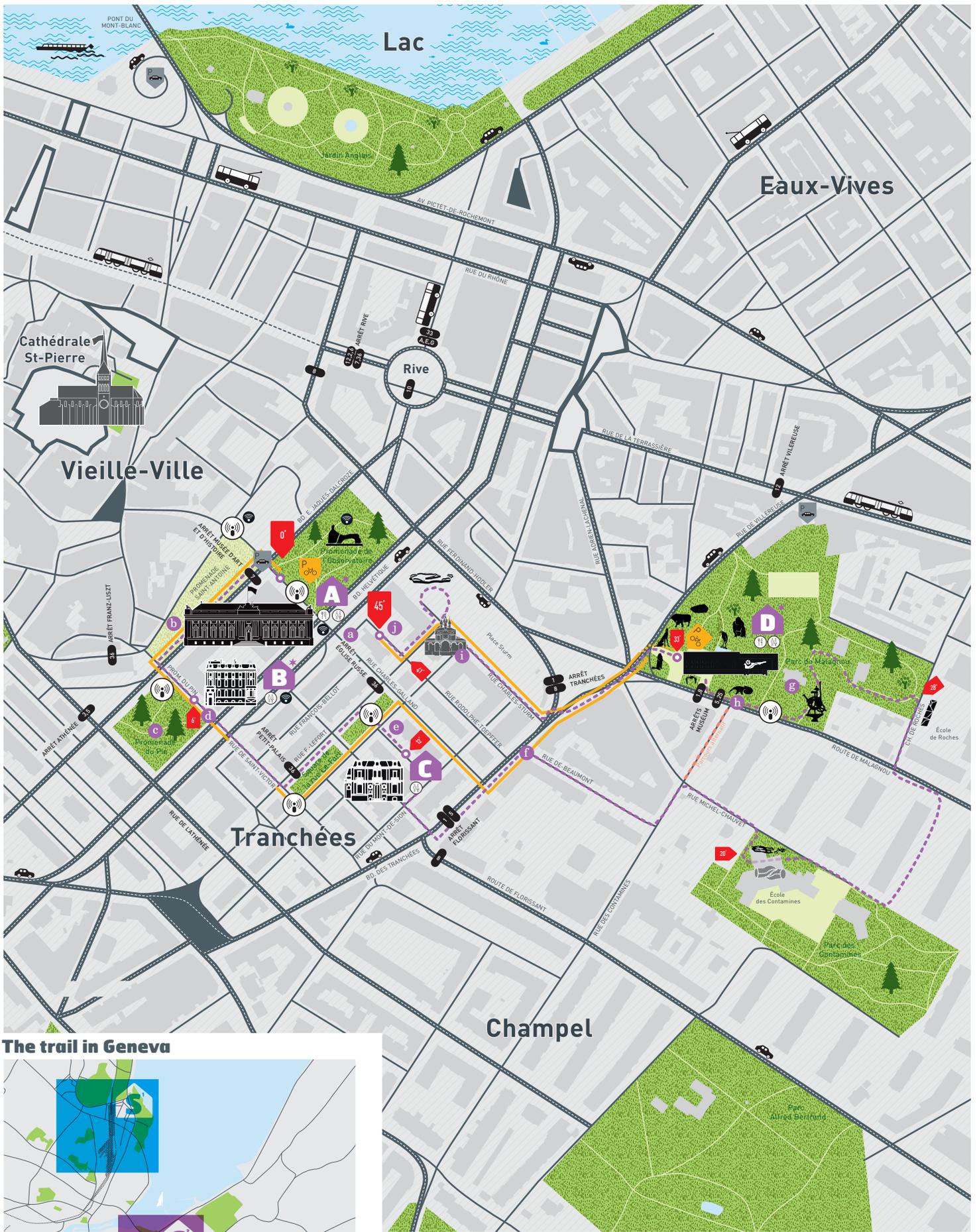
Restaurant



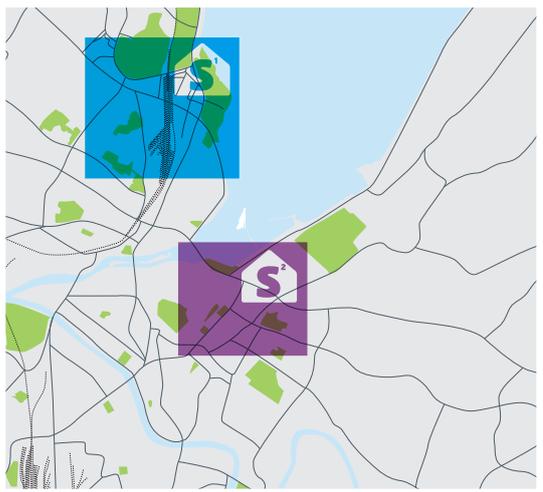
Walking time excluding museum visits

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The trail in Geneva





Rue Charles-Galland 2

Museum of Art and History



Before its construction, between 1903 and 1909, the Museum of Art and History was the source of considerable debate, notably regarding the question of its location. The original idea of creating a museum dates back to 1886, when the diverse collections that had come to enrich Geneva during the 19th century, like those of the Academic Museum and the School of Applied Arts, were spread throughout the city. An initial competition launched that year was unsuccessful, partly due to indecision concerning the site of the museum. Alternative proposals were put forward but the project was abandoned due to the state of the municipal funds.

However, the National Exhibition of 1896 revived ambitions concerning culture and identity, which became focused on the creation of a museum dedicated to art and history. The National Museum in Zurich, as well as the National Exhibition, which brought together fine arts and vestiges of the past, served as precedents for this form of presentation highlighting the rich heritage acquired throughout Switzerland.

As the 19th century drew to an end, increasing attention was paid to collections and their conservation and the issue of a “Central Museum”, as it was called by its instigators, the Auxiliary Society of the Geneva Museum, was even more pronounced than for the first competition. Uniting in one place the municipal collections for scientific and educational purposes, increasing visitor numbers, as well as providing models for artists and craftsmen in order to renew local traditions, were the objectives widely expressed in many written texts. Rooms from the Château of Zizers, still visible today in the Museum of Art and History, were purchased by the Society in this spirit, in order to “provide our artists and builders, in a truly Swiss spirit, with valuable insights.”

The question of the target public was nevertheless the subject of much debate: should the museum be placed geographically closer to working people in order to facilitate access or make the institution the brand image of the city by associating it with the finest districts? Finally, during the Municipal Council meeting of 4 May 1900, after exchanges covering the political, economic and urban planning issues, the Casemates, on the fringes of modern Geneva’s exclusive quarter, was chosen. Some months later, the Administrative Council launched a competition for the construction of the Museum of Art and History, its official title as from 1901, though more commonly known as the “Grand musée”.

The architect Marc Camoletti, whose name can be seen at the bottom right of the main facade, won the competition out of the 43 projects submitted. Born into a family of renowned Genevan architects, he had already designed, with his brother John, the main post office on the Rue du Mont-Blanc. His project attracted attention as it was, on the one hand, the only one to propose two floors above the level of the Promenade de l’Observatoire, thus gaining a considerable amount of space, and as

it conformed, on the other, to the competition’s requirements. The Museum of Art and History is thus formed of a vast four-sided building constructed around a square courtyard. The main facade has a regular arrangement of huge Ionic columns and large, arched windows that illuminate the exhibition rooms of the *piano nobile*. In the central axis, a group of figures sculpted by Paul Amlehn crowns the edifice. Representing Fame at the centre leaning on the eagle of Geneva, with Architecture and Sculpture on the right and History and Painting on the left, these sculptures summarise in allegorical form the museum’s contents. Over some 7000m², the Museum of Art and History invites visitors to embark on a journey through time. Containing around 650,000 objects, including major works and unique series, its five floors present part of its collections devoted to the applied arts, fine arts and archaeology, making it one of the three largest museums in Switzerland. Painting, sculpture, historic rooms and objects, musical instruments, etc. all testify to the development of art and everyday life over thousands of years. The museum also organises around a dozen temporary exhibitions annually. The Museum of Art and History is currently the subject of a major renovation and extension project led by Jean Nouvel.



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mail mah@ville-ge.ch
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Open Tuesday to Sunday 11.00 – 18.00

Admission fees: Free admission to permanent collections. Admission fee of 5 CHF – 20 CHF depending on the temporary exhibitions.

Free admission for under 18s and on the first Sunday of the month

a **Rue Charles-Galland** (1816-1901) A remarkable broker and asset manager, Charles Galland was also a patron of the arts passionate about music. A careful but generous philanthropist “he was taken for someone who gave sparingly when in fact he gave a great deal. There was in him a little of what is known as the gruff benefactor.” (*Journal de Genève*, 03.13.1901). The donation of his entire fortune



to the City of Geneva - 8.5 million – enabled the latter to finance the construction of the Museum of Art and History. The City paid tribute to him by naming the former Rue de l’Observatoire after him. Charles Galland himself lived just a stone’s throw away at 8 Rue Toefffer.

Reclining Figure: Arch leg, Henry Moore, 1969-1970
Promenade de l’Observatoire

Before continuing on the journey of discovery through part of Geneva’s history, it’s worth going up onto the Promenade de l’Observatoire to admire the statue composed entirely of curved forms by Henry Moore (1898-1986). This English sculptor liked to explore the theme of the reclining figure. The catalogue of his sculpted work contains around six hundred items, of which one hundred are Reclining Figures and only five are of such large dimensions. The force of the Museum of Art and History’s example lies in the opposition between the two masses that construct the volume in space. As for the void that contributes to the definition of the form, it is typical of Moore’s research throughout his work.



b A pause in the shade of the trees – notably aligned *à la française* – on the Promenade Saint-Antoine provides an opportunity to consider the history of Geneva’s urbanisation. The Museum of Art and History, as well as the group of buildings to its right, have been constructed on land formerly occupied by fortifications dating mainly from the first half of the 18th century.

In 1849, the government of Geneva ordered the demolition of the fortifications, thus putting an end to the centuries-old defensive urban strategy. Based on an extension plan drawn up by the engineer Léopold Blotnitzki, the city consequently doubled in size in the course of half a century. The urbanisation of the plateau thus gave rise to the most luxurious of the new districts of the day, called “Tranchées” (trenches), due to the former military installations that encircled the hill, from the Bastions gardens to the gate at Rive. Among the buyers of the land decommissioned and auctioned off by the government, the “*Compagnie Anonyme des Immeubles des Tranchées*” (Anonymous Company of Tranchées Buildings), set up in 1860, purchased many of the lots. The families Pictet-De la Rive and Plantamour, shareholders in the company, shared between themselves the plots of land bordering on the Bastion du Pin. Their buildings, today forming 1-5 Promenade du Pin, were completed some years later.

Further down, along the Boulevard Jaques-Dalcroze, adjacent to number 1 Promenade du Pin, is the **Casemates primary school**, construc-

ted in 1902 by Léon and Frantz Fulpius, winners of the architecture competition launched in 1899, together with the one for the **School of Fine Arts** planned to be built along the Boulevard Helvétique. The latter school was designed by the architects Frédéric de Morsier and Charles Weibel in the Viennese Secession style between 1903 and 1904.

Franz Liszt in Geneva

At the far end of the Promenade Saint-Antoine, the Place Liszt reminds us of the presence of **Franz Liszt** (1811-1886) in Geneva. The Hungarian composer and virtuoso pianist lived for just one year (1835-1836) in the corner building that dominates the square that bears his name; sufficient time to leave a lasting impression on Geneva’s citizens. The Countess Marie d’Agoult had abandoned her husband and children in Paris to follow the handsome composer, who found time to be unfaithful to her, meeting his mistresses in the secluded pavilion of the Pont de Sierne. Georges Sand joined the couple and made a point of being seen with Major Pictet, the son of the illustrious Charles Pictet de Rochemont, whom she later ridiculed in the *Tenth Letter of a Traveller*. In Geneva, Marie d’Agoult gave birth to a daughter, Blandine, recognised by Liszt; the two lovers benefitting from James Fazy’s good offices and false declarations to legalise their complicated civil status... Franz Liszt gave lessons at the Conservatory of Music in Place Neuve, as well as to private students, notably Aurélie Calame, the wife of Alexandre Calame, whose works are exhibited at the Museum of Art and History and whose name is engraved on the institution’s facade.



c The Promenade du Pin

The former Bastion du Pin, with a pine tree at its farthest extremity, extended in a point towards Champel. It was connected to the latter via a suspension bridge with wire cables that cost 2 centimes to cross. Converted into a Promenade in 1865-66, modelled on an English-style garden, it formed a small park full of mystery and hiding places where winding paths meandered among areas of deep shade. The creation of gardens and promenades in all the new districts fulfilled a double objective: to offer rich foreign visitors a more attractive environment and to provide more salubrious recreational spaces for the growing population – 38,000 in 1850, 60,000 in 1870. The new posts of Head of the Promenades and of Gardener-in-Chief of the City attest to the importance accorded to these tasks.

Constructed between 1861 and 1865 on the site of earlier fortifications, numbers 1-3-5 of the Promenade du Pin, although displaying different sensitivities that reflect their owners’ tastes, nevertheless form a homogenous group due to the uniformity of the construction materials and the regularity of the floor levels.

Numbers 1 and 3: Pictet-De la Rive buildings

The architect Jacques-Louis Brocher, who trained at the School of Fine Arts in Paris, designed two buildings whose facades express the historicist taste of the second half of the 19th century. The symmetrical

arrangement of the facade, surmounted by pediments each with a bull’s eye window and sculpted with arabesques, echoes the early 18th century buildings in the Rue des Granges and those of the Promenade Saint-Antoine. The main entrance, surmounted by a Second Empire-style large arched window, establishes a symmetry between numbers 1 and 3 of the Promenade.

Number 5: Plantamour building

The architect Charles-Gabriel Diodati for his part designed a more “modern” building distinguished notably by its remarkably worked and corbelled oriel window. The facade decorated with monumental pilasters and lyre-shaped windows is in an elegant neoclassical style. The sculpted ornamentation was entrusted to Charles-Menn and represents, above the ground floor windows, allegories of the seasons.

The building was left to the City of Geneva in 1927 by Mme Diodati-Plantamour, on the condition that it should be attached to the Museum of Art and History. The Library of Art and Archaeology of the Museum of Art and History, the most important in Switzerland in these fields, was installed here in 1947 following major, preparatory transformation work. On the top floor, the *Cabinet des estampes* (Print Room), now the *Cabinet d’arts graphiques* (Gallery of Graphic Arts) of the Museum of Art and History, also moved into these premises in 1952.



Promenade du Pin 5

Gallery of Graphic Arts of the Museum of Art and History

tel 022 418 27 70
mail cdag@ville-ge.ch
web ville-geneve.ch/mah

Open Tuesday to Sunday 11.00 – 18.00,
only during temporary exhibitions
Admission fees: Adults 3 CHF; senior
citizens, jobseekers and students
2 CHF; free admission for under 18s and
on the First Sunday of the month



The Gallery of Graphic Arts was created in 1886 through the willingness of the municipal authorities to bring together in one place all the engravings belonging to the City of Geneva. Integrated to the Museum of Art and History when the latter was established in 1910, it has been housed since 1952 in the former Diodati-Plantamour mansion at 5 Promenade du Pin.

The “*Cabinet d’arts graphiques*”, its name today, possesses some 375,000 drawings, pastels, prints and multiples. Recognised as one of the most important European collections of works on paper, it notably holds one of the three largest collections of drawings, prints, posters and sketchbooks by Ferdinand Hodler, the largest collection in the world of works by Jean-Étienne Liotard and a reference collection of prints by Félix Vallotton, John M Armleder and Hans Hartung.

Due to the fragility of paper, the Gallery of Graphic Arts only puts its pieces on display for temporary exhibitions. These mainly spotlight its collections, in association with national and international loans. The collections are moreover accessible by appointment to anyone providing proof of research work.

d Before reaching the Baur Foundation, it’s worth strolling through **modern Geneva’s first residential district**, whose network of orthogonal streets has permitted the construction of private mansions and apartment blocks. According to the principles of hygiene of the day, these constructions are all small in scale to guarantee sunlight and air circulation. This pleasant district is well planted with trees and many of the buildings have their own small gardens. The verdant Cours Le-Fort was conceived as the heart of this small garden city.

A residential urban district appreciated by the bourgeoisie, the Tranchées attracted famous people and rich industrialists who made significant contributions to the area or helped to enrich its history.

Installed in the Rue Saint-Victor in a fine Second Empire private mansion designed by the architect Auguste Pompée, the **Petit Palais** was completely altered and extended when converted into a museum, going from two floors to six levels (three below ground level, where vestiges of the former ramparts of the Old Town were found). Created by Oscar Ghez, an industrialist who had made his fortune in rubber, the museum – now closed – was inaugurated in 1968. It houses a remarkable collection of works by French painters, covering the period from Impressionism to the School of Paris.

Although the mansions at numbers 8 to 12 of the Rue Bellot are remarkable for their architectural homogeneity, it is the presence of an illustrious occupant at number 11 that we’d like to recall at this point. **Ernest Ansermet**, musicologist and conductor, moved here in 1942 after his second marriage to Juliette Salvisberg. Claude Frochaux writes in *La Mémoire de mes souvenirs* that “There was a magnificent library, an even more fabulous record collection, African masks everywhere and, on the walls, extraordinary contemporary paintings: Picassos, Braques, Miròs and I don’t know what else”, all originals, generally given to him by his friends. Initially a mathematics professor, Ernest Ansermet studied music in parallel. From 1911, he directed various orchestras in the Lake Geneva region, then Diaghilev appointed him as conductor of the Ballets Russes from 1915 to 1923, an honour that brought him international renown. In 1918, he founded the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande (Orchestra of Western Switzerland) which he led until 1967. A musical philosopher and committed artist, Ernest Ansermet created some of the most remarkable works of the 20th century and profoundly shaped the cultural landscape of Western Switzerland.



e Rue Munier-Romilly (1788-1875)

A portrait painter famous throughout Europe, Amélie Munier-Romilly saw streams of famous visitors to Geneva passing through her studio. A watchmaker's daughter, at 16 years old she was apprenticed to the painter Firmin-Massot, who would remain her teacher and friend. At 19, she was already living off the sales of her first portraits and then left to complete her training in Paris – chaperoned by her

mother about whom she complained for not allowing her to paint nudes! Exhibiting regularly at the Salon du Louvre, she travelled increasingly to Paris, then to London where she painted many portraits of the English nobility. By the time of her death, she had produced more than 5000 portraits, oil paintings, pastels, engravings and lithographs. She was one of the very few women to have given her name to a street in Geneva before the 20th century.



Rue Munier-Romilly 8

Baur Foundation, Museum of Far Eastern Arts

Marie Micheli-Ador, wife of the botanist Marc Micheli, acquired some land on the Tranchées plateau at the end of the 19th century, after four of her five children had moved out of their family home at the Château du Crest in Jussy. In 1897, she commissioned the associated architects Charles Gampert and Jean-Louis Cayla to construct an ensemble of three adjoining buildings, at the corner of Rue Munier-Romilly and Rue du Mont-de-Sion. These mansions had to measure up to the most representative buildings in the district, such as the Petit Palais and the Palais de l'Athénée. Although the architecture of the Hôtel Micheli-Ador is characteristic of its day, Gampert and Cayla nevertheless broke with the regular square design through the use of projections and recesses, thus animating the volumes and giving the front building greater plasticity and character. The diverse types of openings (windows with lintels, arched windows, bull's eye windows...) and the sculpted decorations of garlands above them enliven the mansion's prevailing French classicism.

Although Marc Micheli died soon after moving into the townhouse in the Rue Munier-Romilly, Marie Micheli-Ador lived there until she passed away, having led a lavish lifestyle. On her death in 1938, the property remained in shared ownership until the Swiss collector Alfred Baur acquired the building in order to make available to the public his collections of Asian art objects.

Just after the end of the Second World War, when the idea of a foundation was taking shape in the collector's mind, the latter set out to find premises that would allow the public to appreciate his artworks. He first set his sights on the buildings in the Promenade du Pin. As negotiations with the Administrative Council were unproductive, Alfred Baur widened his search within the same district and fell under the spell of Marie Micheli-Ador's edifice, rented out at the time to the Red Cross. The intimate setting of a private mansion was perfect for the display of his collections. In such surroundings, visitors



would feel at home and could admire at their leisure the remarkable ensemble of Chinese ceramics, jades and snuff bottles from the 8th to the 19th century, as well as Japanese art objects (lacquer, prints, netsuke and sword fittings) assembled by this passionate collector throughout his lifetime. Alfred Baur acquired the building shortly before his death in 1951 and it was in 1963, after the demise of his widow, that the Alfred and Eugénie Baur-Duret Foundation began transforming it into a museum exhibition space.

This entailed a substantial amount of work. In order to gain more space, the grand staircases leading from the first to the second floor made way for a Japanese style wooden staircase with bannister. As for the original decoration, judged too heavy, it was replaced by added, customized decoration in accordance with the objects displayed in the rooms and showcases: the ground and first floors fitted out with refined luxury housed ceramics from the Tang (618-907) and Qing

(1644-1911) dynasties as well as the jades, while the spaces on the second floor, steeped in a sober atmosphere, were devoted to Japanese art.

A few years after the museum opened, the need for an extension became apparent. The architect J.-A Perret achieved an amazing *tour de force*; although the mansion's facade appeared untouchable, he designed a corner tower to replace the former veranda, that looked deceptively similar to Gampert and Cayla's architecture. Later work carried out in 1995 enabled the creation of temporary exhibition spaces and a seminar room in the below ground levels. Lastly, since 2010, the Japanese collections have benefited from a new presentation on the second floor, reinterpreted according to a minimalist aesthetic that respects the building's original architecture.

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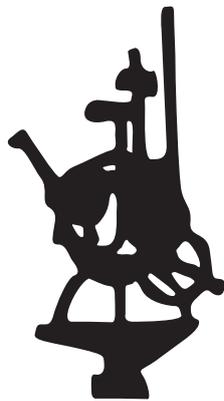
Open Tuesday to Sunday 14.00 – 18.00

Admission fees: adults 10 CHF; those receiving a disability allowance, students, jobseekers, groups of 10 or more people 5 CHF; free for under 16s; special exhibitions 15 CHF; special exhibitions (concessions) 10 CHF

f The land beyond the current Boulevard des Tranchées was, until the mid-19th century, a vast fertile meadow – which moreover gave its name to the district: the Contamines, alluding to an area of land owned jointly by two lords or exploited by peasant farmers – that belonged to Geneva Hospital. The institution did not wish to part with it and it was only after lengthy negotiations that the surgeon **François-Louis Senn** managed to purchase one of the plots of land for the construction there, in 1853, of an innovative series of houses at this time of major urban changes. In the form of an L around a square, these semi-detached houses sold to different buyers possess the uniformity desired by Doctor Senn. The latter had realised early on that it was vital to increase the density of the outlying parts of the city, irrespective of the country properties. The first urban milestone to be built in mid-19th century Geneva, this square would be echoed in the future urban planning of the Tranchées district – that we have just visited. François-Louis Senn himself lived in the corner house, the largest of this residential ensemble.

g The pleasant Parc de Malagnou, we pass the former property of **Dr. Lombard** which today houses the Department of Culture and Sport of the City of Geneva, as well as the chalet that served as an annex, before reaching the **Villa Bryn Bella**.

In 1842, when Louis Antoine Stouvenel began the construction of his mansion, the land was covered with vines and gave its owner an exceptional view of the lake. This just shows how much the landscape of this area has changed over time! In 1852, Stouvenel sold his property to Thomas Molyneux who made numerous modifications to it and named it “Bryn Bella”, after his wife Anna Bella William – “bryn” meaning “hill” in Welsh. As for the park, in 1878 it acquired roughly the form that we can observe today. In 1964, once the plans for the forthcoming Natural History Museum had been formulated, it was suggested that the future Museum of Watchmaking should be housed at the Villa Bryn Bella. It was subsequently installed there in 1972, and its collections delighted enthusiasts until 2002, the year when hundreds of precious objects from its collections were stolen in a robbery, which led to the permanent closure of the museum.



h **Route de Malagnou**
Named after the Malagniod family who, in the 16th and 17th centuries, owned land in the hamlet, this road leading towards Savoy was an ancient route linking fortified Geneva to its hinterland. Before finally coming under the jurisdiction of Geneva in the 19th century, the essentially rural communes bordering the city often changed hands in



Alternative itinerary

At this point in the Trail, visitors have two options: a detour via Contamines school, continuing along Rue Michel-Chauvet in order to view an artwork by **Albert Gaeng**, **Counterpoint and fugue** (1972-74) on the building’s facade and the red tubes (1974-75) by **Serge Candolfi** enclosed in a glass cage in the middle of the outer corridors. Then, making your way between the buildings, you can re-join the Chemin de Roches and take a look at the work by **Gabriel Stanulis** on the edge of the playground of Roches school. The second option is to go directly into Malagnou Park along the Rue des Contamines.

Originally, this mansion, probably built by the architect Jean-Philippe Monod, was only quadrilateral in form, though richly decorated: the entrance on the main facade is surmounted by a pediment, there are double columns and niches for sculptures. In 1854-55, two rectangular wings were added to the Villa Bryn Bella, which blend with the existing building and one of which has windows for an orangery on the west side. A bow window was also added to the rear of the building and French windows there provide access to the garden. With these additions, Molyneux upset the original balance that characterized Stouvenel’s house. The proprietor was in accordance, on the one hand, with 17th century architectural trends that favoured wings set at right angles and, on the other, with a relative modernity in the asymmetric, picturesque option of the orangery. The building now accommodates the Cultural Promotion Service of the Department of Culture and Sport of the City of Geneva, as well as the Natural History Museum’s Cultural Interpretation Service.

Clepsydra or Dream in A flat, Johan Josef Heeb, 1975-1976

Parc de Malagnou

Josef Heeb (1930-1980) started out as a musical instrument maker. One day, he wanted to make something himself and produced a clock from six bicycles, fascinated as he was by the dimension of “time”; that which passes, that which we waste; the time that is different for everyone. Installed in Malagnou Park owing to the former presence there of the Museum of Watchmaking, the big blue clepsydra, or water clock, was painted black during a conservation treatment.



the course of successive wars and treaties. However, in the late 18th century, the rich bourgeoisie of Geneva began constructing fine summer residences there, some of which still survive today. When the Tranchées district was being developed, hundreds of dusty carts transporting stone from the Veyrier quarries to the city passed through it daily.



Route de Malagnou 1

Natural History Museum

tel 022 418 63 00
mail info-mhn@ville-ge.ch
web museum-geneve.ch

Open Tuesday to Sunday
10.00 - 17.00
Admission free

Great museums, great histories – that of the Natural History Museum spans two centuries!

The collections of the Natural History Museum comprise some 15 million specimens that are stored, classified and studied, while only the most significant objects are displayed to the public. For more than two hundred years, they have continued to increase thanks to donations, acquisitions or items collected in the field. It was in 1794 that the question of creating a Natural History Museum arose in Geneva, but the project was abandoned after Geneva's Annexation by France in 1798. The undertaking was renewed in 1810. The first Academic Museum, drawn from private collections was established in the Grand-Rue in 1818. Designed to complement the Academy, it hosted courses from 1819 onwards and, from 1820, was open to the public on Thursday afternoons.

In 1872, the Natural History Museum moved to a new, purpose-built edifice at Bastions – the “Jura” wing of the present University – but the lack of space rapidly became apparent. For its part, the University was interested in the building that adjoined its own premises, leading the City to negotiate with the State of Geneva to hand over the latter in exchange for the Place Sturm. The architecture competition for a Natural History Museum in Place Sturm – by then being known as the *muséum* (denoting a museum devoted to natural sciences) to distinguish it from the City's other *musées* – was won in 1911 by Maurice Braillard. The project was however doomed by the First World War and the economic crisis. The problem of lack of space remained unsolved and the situation would continue to deteriorate for the next two decades.

In 1943, the museum's Director put a proposition to the Administrative Council for the construction of a building large enough to contain the museum and all its annexes. The land at the corner of the Route de Malagnou and the Rue de Villeureuse seemed appropriate, even though it implied the destruction of the houses then occupying the site. Whereas the preoccupations which had dominated the

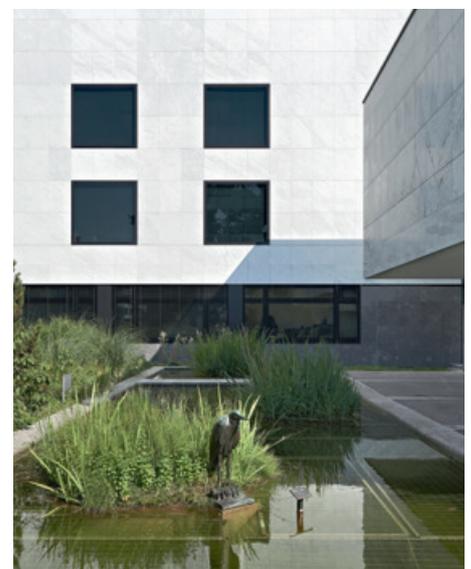


competition programme for the construction of the Museum of Art and History at the end of the 19th century had focused mainly on the museum's symbolic value, the concerns were completely different in 1946: public access to exhibitions, exhibition equipment, visitor circulation, etc. The Swiss architect Raymond Tschudin won the competition in the second round. However, the housing crisis hit Geneva and the City had to invest in new housing as a priority. The construction project for a Natural History Museum was shelved once again and would not be revived until 1956. As almost a decade had gone by, Raymond Tschudin had to make numerous changes to his initial project. The exhibition building's lighting system was notably an issue. In order to avoid completely modifying the project that had received the Municipal Council's approval, it was decided to black out the windows. Building work started in 1960. During the construction of the Natural History Museum in Malagnou, the one in Bastions continued to function as best it could until 1965. The transfer of the entire collections, spread over five different locations, took 28 weeks to complete: 500,000 kilos of materiel were transported in 335 lorry journeys and 280 trolley loads. The museum opened in December 1966, although the official ceremony did not take place until March 1967.

Three separate sections make up the building. The one housing the collections, workshops and laboratories forms an obtuse angle and is situated behind the main building. The public entrance, surmounted by a volume resting on six pillars, projects outward from the facade and accommodates a lecture room. The main building, whose facades are covered with alternating white Carrara marble slabs and

black squares of tinted glass, has five levels open to visitors. The permanent galleries are devoted to: regional fauna (including virtually all the vertebrate species in Switzerland) on the ground floor; mammals and birds of the world on the first floor; amphibians, reptiles, fish, insects and other invertebrates on the second floor; the adventure of the planet Earth, the history of Man, minerals and geology of the Geneva region on the third floor; and lastly, Swiss geology on the fourth floor. The museum also contains the reconstruction of Lucy, a dinosaur podium, a presentation of all the known varieties of tigers and dioramas of the Arctic and the Antarctic.

As soon as it opened, the Natural History Museum was a great success. Mention was frequently made of the modernity of the new museum, both in terms of the attractive exhibition design that was innovative for its day and the external envelope with its simple and regular volumes highlighting the materials (marble, concrete and glass) and with no additional ornamentation – except for the artwork by Paul Bianchi on the portico.



Parc de Malagnou and its sculptures

Over the years, sculptures have naturally taken their place in the Museum's park planted with one hundred year old trees. A stone **marmot** that seems to survey its surroundings from the top of a rock was one of the first sculptures installed in the park in 1967. It is the work of the famous naturalist **Robert Hainard**, as is the bronze **grey heron** (1981) watching over the pool next to the entrance. The idea of decorating the facade of the museum was probably put forward when the building was first designed. The **bas-relief** by the sculptor **Paul Bianchi**, placed there in 1973, often intrigues visitors. Untitled, it symbolises the earth's crust and the life that arose from the oceans. A spineless sea urchin occupies the upper left part of the sculpture. In 1961, the same artist created an elegant **seated leopard**, also one of the first sculptures to occupy the park in 1966. The **barn owl** perched on its wings (1970) and the **anteater** (1969) at the rear of the building near the Route de Malagnou are the work of **Yvan-Louis Larsen**, taxidermist at the Natural History Museum. The impressive bronze **gorilla** (1984) is by Louis Gallet who took for his model Mock, a primate at London Zoo. The granite



bull (1947) created by **Luc Jaggi** was initially intended to decorate the entrance to the City's new abattoirs. Following the closure of the latter, it was moved to Parc de Malagnou in 1997. Lastly, an **erratic boulder** composed of stones of different kinds and colours produced by the destruction of other pre-existing rocks was discovered during construction work on the Lausanne-Geneva motorway. It was decided to install it in front of the museum in 1979, as evidence of our glacial past. For when the Rhône glacier advanced into the Geneva region between 70,000 and 10,000 BC, it brought with it large numbers of stones wrested from the Alps along its route. When the ice melted, around 12,000 BC, boulders like these – called erratics, from the Latin *errare* “to wander” – were left behind.

On our return to the Tranchées plateau, we are drawn to the golden cupolas visible between the buildings. But before we discover the Russian Church, a detour via the Place Sturm is not to be missed.

Laurent de Pury, 2004

Place Sturm

The plant world and the kind of permanence and infinite respiration it offers is the main field of exploration of Laurent de Pury (1958-). All of the artist's sculptures comprise at least one element of natural origin. Here, the sculptor exploits wood and its flexibility to produce seemingly infinite elegant curves. De Pury places his work directly on the ground, which becomes its true support, thus helping to desacralize the sculpture.

i The Russian Church

On a plot of land donated by the government of Geneva, the Russian Church was constructed between 1863 and 1866 thanks to funds raised in Russia (Emperor Alexander II sent 3000 roubles). It was designed by an architect from Saint Petersburg, David Grimm, but built by two local architects Jean-Pierre Guillebaud and Antoine Krafft. Originally, the eight golden cupolas – a ninth one was added above the porch created in 1916 – towered above a complete desert, as the future Tranchées district did not then exist. It is therefore moving to see, on old photographs, elegant women in their hats and long dresses hurrying

to this splendid and completely isolated place of worship. Inside, the faithful prayed in opulent, sacred surroundings: the painted decor is the work of the artists Joseph Benzoni and Giacomo Donati. Louis Rubio created the icons on the doors of the iconostasis. The paintings on the latter are by Grigori Kochelev, a colleague of Grimm at the Fine Arts Academy in Saint-Petersburg.

Sophie, Dostoyevsky's daughter (who wrote part of *The Idiot* in Geneva) was baptised at the Russian Church and her name features in the registry.

j Rodolphe Toepffer (1799-1846)

The walk ends in front of the bust of Rodolphe Toepffer, the work of his son Charles. A family of artists: Rodolphe's father was the painter Adam Toepffer. Rodolphe also wanted to be a painter, but was prevented from doing so by an eye disease he contracted at the age of 17. He became a teacher and a personality at the boarding school where he worked, at 14 Promenade Saint-Antoine. He employed innovative

methods, taking his pupils on long trips which he then related in a lively manner in albums illustrated with drawings. Encouraged notably by Goethe, astounded by the humour in these stories and the novelty of the process, Rodolphe Toepffer produced more and more masterpieces, all full of sparkling wit. He is considered the inventor of the graphic novel.

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