George Eliot, Joseph Conrad, Fyodor Dostoyevsky… Descriptions of Geneva by great writers abound in their novels, poetry, essays and correspondence. Many of the city’s streets are named after famous authors, who came to Geneva in search of inspiration, political asylum, medical treatment or simply peace and quiet and a really lovely view of the lake and the Alps. This edition of the Cultural Trails focuses on Geneva’s historic libraries, linking them in a circuit through the streets of the city to meet famous writers from all over the world who described Geneva in their works. If the excerpts we are quoting awake your interest, why not visit one of the City libraries and go on reading?
Famous writers around Geneva

2 Casanova (1725-1798): Fountain in the Mon Repos Park, near the site of the villa where he spent a memorable evening in 1762.

3 François René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848): Monument honouring his memory on a square bearing his name.

4 Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881): Commemorative plaque on 16, rue du Mont-Blanc. His daughter was christened in the Russian Church.

5 Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869): A quote from the French poet’s “Ressouvenir du Lac Léman” is engraved on a plaque in front of Palais Wilson.

6 Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): Statue on Île Rousseau; ceramic mural representing his greatest works on the facade of the Manor department store, rue de Coutance.

Paulo Coelho,
Eleven Minutes, Harper Collins, New York, 2005
Eleven Minutes © Paulo Coelho, quoted with gracious permission of the author

“Then she went straight to the place she had found on the map. Rue de Berne. At the top of the street was a church (oddly enough, very near the Japanese restaurant where she had had supper the night before), then some shops selling cheap watches and clocks, and, at the far end, were the clubs she had heard about, all of them closed at that hour of the day.”

George Eliot
The Lifted Veil, 1859

“My least solitary moments were those in which I pushed off in my boat, at evening, towards the centre of the lake; it seemed to me that the sky, and the glowing mountain-tops, and the wide blue water, surrounded me with a cherishing love such as no human face had shed on me since my mother’s love had vanished out of my life.”

The History of Science Museum Library
Bibliothèque du Musée d’histoire des sciences

The History of Science Museum, in its beautiful lakeside setting, also houses a library containing over 13,000 monographies – many of them ancient and rare books –, 12,000 brochures/reprints, 40 periodicals, 500 manuscripts and 400 engravings, dedicated to the history of science, technology, medicine and scientific instruments. The History of Science Museum’s unique collection is often used to enrich temporary exhibitions of the Natural History Museum or other institutions.

Sir Isaac Newton, Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica, Coloniae Allobrogum (Cologny, Geneva), 1760, MHS 510 NEW

“Swinging his heavy walking-stick with the ivory raven’s-head handle, all too aware of his cream spats and yellow gloves, replete after the delicious lunch he had eaten at the Perle du Lac, he strode along self-importantly, charmed by the thought of the toxins that had been burned off during his long post-prandial perambulation. When he arrived outside the Palais des Nations, he paused to drink it in. Throwing back his head and breathing deeply through his nostrils, he admired its power and the salaries it paid. An official, he was an official for goodness sake, and he worked in a palace, an immense palace which was brand-new, the latest thing in palace design, old man, every modern convenience! And no income tax, he murmured as he made for the entrance.”

**The Ariana Museum Library**

**Bibliothèque du Musée Ariana**

The Ariana Museum Library is the largest library in Switzerland dedicated to the arts of glass and ceramics. Its mission is threefold: the acquisition, the provision and the preservation of the documents that make up its collections. It is managed by the Art and Archaeology Library of the Art and History Museum. In the collections of the Ariana Library are over 6'300 monographies and 40 periodicals dedicated to the arts of the kiln, ceramics, porcelain, earthenware, stoneware, pottery, glass, stained glass, from the 15th century to our time. The library also offers electronic and multimedia resources.


**The Botanical Garden and Conservatory Library**

**Bibliothèque des Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques**

The Botanical Garden and Conservatory Library is one of the three largest botanical libraries in the world: it aims to preserve a collection that contains almost all the books, periodicals and monographies, about plant life on Earth, according to their geographic distribution, classified by country or region and separated into various categories (family, genus) for study purposes. Founded in 1824 and containing over 110'000 volumes, it has been expanding for almost two centuries thanks to the efforts of renown Genevan botanists, such as the De Candolle family, Edmond Boissier and John Briquet. This jewel among Geneva’s heritage libraries, with its oldest book printed in 1485 and many rare hand-coloured illustrated editions, is used daily by researchers in their work.
Jorge Luis Borges, “The Other” in The Book of Sand (1975)

“I turned to the man and spoke.
“Are you Uruguayan or Argentine?”
“Argentine, but I’ve been living in Geneva since ’14,” came the reply.
There was a long silence.
Then I asked a second question.
“At number seventeen Malagnou, across the street from the Russian Orthodox Church?”
He nodded.
“In that case,” I resolutely said to him, “your name is Jorge Luis Borges. I too am Jorge Luis Borges. We are in 1969, in the city of Cambridge.”
“No,” he answered in my own, slightly distant, voice, “I am here in Geneva, on a bench, a few steps from the Rhône.”

The Geneva Library – Voltaire Institute and Museum
Bibliothèque de Genève – Musée Voltaire

The Voltaire Museum of the Geneva Library is housed in the Villa "Les Délices", Voltaire’s residence between 1755 and 1760. It contains a library of 25'000 titles dedicated to Voltaire and the 18th century, as well as a museum. While Voltaire was living there, Les Délices became a nucleus of literary creativity and philosophical reflection: this is where Voltaire penned, at least in part Candide and his Poem on the Lisbon Disaster. In the Great Drawing Room, he welcomed D’Alembert, who was writing the “Geneva” entry for the Encyclopédie. After Voltaire’s departure, Les Délices’ original landlord, the famous art collector and salesman François Tronchin, moved back in and preserved it as a hub of the arts and culture. The Musée Voltaire at Les Délices is a living testimony to these brilliant moments of the Age of Enlightenment.

Voltaire, La Pucelle d’Orléans, poème en vingt-et-un chants.
Paris : Didot le Jeune, Year III (1795)
Famous writers around Geneva

1. Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986): Commemorative plaque on his former residence at 26, Grand-Rue
2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): Statue on Île Rousseau, commemorative plaque on the site of his birth at 40, Grand-Rue, now the House of Rousseau and Literature
3. Mary Shelley (1797-1851): Statue of the Frankenstein monster on the plain of Plainpalais
4. Rodolphe Toepffer (1799-1746): Bust on Square Toepffer
5. Famous writers, musicians and scientists in the Cimetière de Rois:
   - Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986)
   - Robert Musil (1880-1942)
   - Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829)
   - Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983)
   - Rodolphe Toepffer (1799-1746)
   - Denis de Rougemont (1906-1985)
“In fact, I thought the Bastions a very convenient place, since the girl did not think it prudent as yet to introduce that young man to her mother. It was here, then, I thought, looking round at that plot of ground of deplorable banality, that their acquaintance will begin and go on in the exchange of generous indignations and of extreme sentiments, too poignant, perhaps, for a non-Russian mind to conceive. I saw these two, escaped out of four score of millions of human beings ground between the upper and nether millstone, walking under these trees, their young heads close together. Yes, an excellent place to stroll and talk in. It even occurred to me, while we turned once more away from the wide iron gates, that when tired they would have plenty of accommodation to rest themselves. There was a quantity of tables and chairs displayed between the restaurant chalet and the bandstand, a whole raft of painted deals spread out under the trees.”

The Geneva Library
Bibliothèque de Genève (BGE)

The Geneva Library contains two million items, covering the broadest range of topics and approximately 60 km of stacks! With its formal origins in the foundation of Calvin’s college and academy in 1559, the Geneva Library is historically the oldest of all the City of Geneva’s cultural institutions. Its centres of excellence reflect the significant moments of Geneva’s intellectual, cultural and religious past: the Reformation, the Enlightenment, Genevensia and documents pertaining to the city’s international vocation at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Its main mission is to select, preserve, promote and pass Geneva’s written, printed, musical and iconographic heritage on to the general population as well as to scholars and scientists. Its great reading room, used by many famous people, is still very popular with students today.

A page from the Dialogues of Salmon and Charles VI, illuminated manuscript dated 1412-1415 (BGE, Ms. Fr. 165, f. 4)
Voltaire, *The Civil War of Geneva* (1768)
Tr. T. Teres (1769)

“Sacred to Peter is a temple seen,
But Peter hates it, for a sty’s as clean –
Hard by, upon an ancient wall is plac’d
A pagan idol, half by time defac’d –
Here demons to false oracles give birth,
Before the tribe of preachers swarm’d on earth –
And still thro’ suff’rance of the pow’r divine,
An evil spirit animated the shrine –
For counsel here the Genevese approach,
When by ill luck no sermon is abroach –
Inconstancy her name – who still we find
Too hard for prudence in the human mind –
Perch’d on a vane, by ev’ry tempest blown,
She sits, at once her emblem, and her throne –
An hundred butterflies in mystic rows
Her gay fantastic diadem compose.”

Gabriel García Márquez, “*Bon Voyage, Mr. President*”,

“One on the Pont du Mont-Blanc, the flags of
the Confederation, maddened by the sudden gust
of wind, were being lowered with as much speed
as possible, and the graceful fountain crowned
with foam had been turned off earlier than usual.
The President did not recognize his usual café on
the pier because they had taken down the green
awning over the entrance, and the flower-filled
terraces of summer had just been closed.”

John Berger, *Here Is Where We Meet*,
Pantheon Books, New York, 2005

“The city of Genève is as contradictory and
enigmatic as a living person. I could fill in an
identity card. Nationality: Neutral. Gender: Feminine. Age: (discretion intervenes) Looks younger than she is. Civil status: Separated. Oc-
cupation: Observer. Distinguisihing physical cha-
racteristic: Slight stoop due to short-sightedness. General remarks: Sexy and secretive. (...) On the southern side of Genève, very close to the Rhône as it flows out of the lake, there are a nu-
mer of narrowish, shortish, straight streets of
four-story buildings, built in the nineteenth centu-
ry originally as residential apartments. (...) These streets lead like the aisles which run between the bookshelves of an extensive library. As seen from the street, each line of shut windows is the glass
door to another bookshelf. The closed front doors of varnished wood are the drawers of the library
catalogue. Behind these walls everything is wai-
ting to be read.”
Carlos Fuentes
“Un alma pura (‘A Pure Soul’)”
in Cantar de ciegos (“Song of the Blind”),
Mortiz, Mexico City, 1964

“Yes, you wrote me asking to come and visit; I have your letters. You’d found a room with a kitchen and a bathroom in the prettiest part of Geneva, the Place du Bourg-de-Four. You wrote that it was on the fourth floor, in the centre of the Old Town, and that you could see the pointed roofs, the church spires, the little windows and narrow skylights and beyond them the lake as far as the eye could see, all the way to Vevey, Montreux and Chillon. Your letters were full of the joy of independence. You had to make your bed, sweep the room and make yourself breakfast and pop down to the dairy around the corner. You would have a drink in the café on the square. You spoke so often about it. It’s called La Clémence and it has a green and white striped awning; it’s where one meets all the people who are worth meeting in Geneva. It’s a tiny place, hardly more than six tables in front of the bar where the waitresses are dressed in black and serve cassis to everyone while addressing them as ‘M’sieu Dame’.”

Tranchées – Eaux-Vives

Milan Kundera,
The Unbearable Lightness of Being,
Faber & Faber, London, 1984

“Franz walked to the park. At its far end, the golden cupolas of the Orthodox church rose up like two gilded cannonballs kept from imminent collapse and suspended in the air by some invisible Power. Everything was beautiful. Then he went down to the embankment and took the public transport boat to the north bank of the lake, where he lived.”
**The Art and Archaeology Library**

Bibliothèque d’art et d’archéologie du Musée d’art et d’histoire (BAA)

The Art and Archaeology Library of the Geneva Art and History Museum is the largest art library in Switzerland. Founded in 1910 along with the museum itself, it became a public library in 1911. Its mission is threefold: to acquire, promote and preserve the documents in its collections. It also manages the working libraries of the scientific staff in the Art and History Museum and the Ariana Museum. Its collections contain documents covering all the aspects of art, from prehistoric to contemporary times: over 450,000 monographs, among which 80,000 art exhibition catalogues, 80,000 auction catalogues, 6,200 periodicals, electronic and multimedia tools, as well as a very impressive rare book collection, featuring many ancient books and artistic editions.


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**The Natural History Museum Library**

Bibliothèque du Musée d’histoire naturelle

The Natural History Museum Library preserves, enriches and makes available a collection of documents relevant to the institution’s research fields: zoology, geoscience and zooarchaeology. Lined up, its collections are 3km long. The library also manages two specific collections: the library of a local ornithological society *Nos Oiseaux* and the library of a bat preservation and research centre for Western Switzerland. The Natural History Museum library was founded in 1832 by the Geneva banker and philanthropist François-Jules Pictet-de la Rive, who endowed it with a handsome sum for the acquisition of books. When he died, the Museum inherited a large part of his personal collection. In the permanent collections areas of the building, there are comfortable reading nooks equipped with a selection of books for readers of all ages related to the natural sciences.

“Hoffmann’s hedge fund was based in Les Eaux-Vives, a district just south of the lake, as solid and confident as the nineteenth-century Swiss businessmen who had built it: heavy masonry, wide faux-Parisian boulevards webbed with tram cables, cherry trees erupting from the kerbsides to shower dusty white and pink blossom over the grey pavements, shops and restaurants on the ground floors, seven storeys of offices and apartments stacked imperturbably above. Amid this bourgeois respectability, Hoffmann Investment Technologies presented a narrow Victorian façade to the world, easy to miss unless you were looking for it, with only a small name tag on an entry phone to betray its existence.”

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 1818

“It was completely dark when I arrived in the environs of Geneva; the gates of the town were already shut; and I was obliged to pass the night at Secheron, a village at the distance of half a league from the city. The sky was serene; and, as I was unable to rest, I resolved to visit the spot where my poor William had been murdered. As I could not pass through the town, I was obliged to cross the lake in a boat to arrive at Plainpalais. During this short voyage I saw the lightning playing on the summit of Mont Blanc in the most beautiful figures.”
Musical Collection —
The Geneva Library
Bibliothèque de Genève — La Musicale

The Musical Collection of the Geneva Library is a remarkably rich collection of printed music, numbering approximately 50,000 scores. Visitors to the Music Library can access all kinds of musical materials: music scores, orchestra performance materials, librettos and historical documents charting the evolution of musical life in Geneva. The Music Library is also developing a collection of musical scores for free public usage.

The Museum of
Ethnography Library
La Bibliothèque Marie Madeleine Lancoux du MEG

The Marie-Madeleine Lancoux Library is situated under the ridge of the new Geneva Museum of Ethnography’s roof. Its collection specializes in social and cultural anthropology and the arts and cultures of the five continents. With approximately 60,000 documents in its collection, on all types of support, it also features the Georges-Amoudruz Collection, dedicated to the cultures of the Alpine Crescent and the Rhône Valley.

It also hosts the Swiss Society of Americanists’ library.

In addition to the main reading room, the Lancoux Library has number of other spaces: Le Bocal (“The Fishbowl”), a closed space for researchers only; a small theatre for viewing ethnographic films, and a Music Salon, where visitors can listen to materials from the International Archives of Folk Music (AIMP), whose 16,000 hours of audio recordings make it one of the largest collections of ethnic and folk music in the world.

Monographie ethnographique des tribus fung : Bantous de la forêt du Gabon, Afrique équatoriale française: documents réunis de 1913 à 1931/ by F. Grébert ; foreword by Eugène Pittard ; edited in Geneva, 1940. Typewritten unpublished manuscript with original hand-coloured illustrations by the author.

The Geneva Library —
Iconography
Bibliothèque de Genève — Iconographie

The Iconography Centre at the Geneva Library contains about 4 million images. It was created in 1993 when two collections were brought under one roof: the first, a historic archive of iconographic materials in the Geneva Library, and the second consisting of images from the Documentary Service of Old Geneva, an institution dating back to 1907 and part of the Art and History Museum. Both collections have been managed by the Geneva Library since 2008.

Fred Boissonnas, *Self-portraits with a canvas*, Boissonnas Album, 1896, CIG Y631
The City of Geneva’s Department of Culture and Sport manages an important network of libraries that are divided into three units. The first unit is made up of the Municipal Libraries, which are present in seven neighbourhoods, within easy reach and favouring a low-threshold encounter with the written word. The second unit consists of the Geneva Library (Bibliothèque de Genève) and its important ancient and encyclopaedic collections, as well as three extramural institutions: the Voltaire Museum, the Music Library and the Centre for Iconography. The third unit is composed of the research libraries associated with the various City museums, which have an academic vocation but are nevertheless open to the public.

Pâquis – Nations

F Bibliothèque des Pâquis
17 rue du Môle, 1201 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 37 50
email webbmu@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/bm
opening hours
Tu, Th: 1:30PM – 4:30PM; We: 9AM – 6:30PM; Sa: 9AM – 1PM
transport Tram 15 (stop Môle), Bus 1 (stop Navigation)

G History of Science Museum Library
Parc de La Perle du Lac – 128 Rue de Lausanne, 1202 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 50 68
email biblio.mhs@ville-ge.ch
web museum-geneve.ch
opening hours
Mo, We: 9AM – 12AM & 2PM – 5PM; Fr: 9AM – 6PM,
Sa: 1:30PM – 7PM
transport Bus 7, 11 (stop Miléant); 6, 10, 19 (stop Charmilles)

Plainpalais – Jonction

J Bibliothèque des Minoteries
5 Parc des Minoteries, 1205 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 37 45
email webbmu@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/bm
opening hours adults
Tu, Th, Fr: 3PM – 7PM; We: 10AM – 6PM; Sa: 10AM – 1PM
transport Tram 12 (stop Augustins); Bus 35 (stop Augustins)

P Voltaire Institute and Museum – The Geneva Library
25 Rue des Déllices, 1203 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 95 60
email institut.voltaire@ville-ge.ch
web bge-geneve.ch/voltaire
opening hours
Mo – Fr: 9AM – 12AM & 2PM – 5PM (library); Mo – Sa: 2PM – 5PM (museum)
transport Bus 9 (stop Musée Voltaire); 7, 11 (stop Déllices); 6, 10, 19 (stop Prairie)

Q Bibliothèque de la Servette
9 Rue Veyrassat, 1202 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 37 80
email webbmu@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/bm
opening hours
Mo – Fr: 9AM – 6PM; Sa: 9AM – 12AM
transport Tram 14 (stop Servette); Bus 3, 11 (stop Servette)

Saint-Jean – Servette

0 Bibliothèque de Saint-Jean
19 Avenue des Tilleuls, 1203 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 92 01
email webbmu@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/bm
opening hours
Tu, Th, Fr: 3PM – 7PM; We: 10AM – 6PM;
Sa: 1:30PM – 7PM
transport Bus 7, 11 (stop Miléant); 6, 10, 19 (stop Charmilles)

Bastions – Old Town – Rues Basses

A The Geneva Library (BGE)
1 Promenade des Bastions, 1204 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 28 00
email info.bge@ville-ge.ch
web bge-geneve.ch
opening hours
Tu, Th, Fr: 3PM – 7PM; We: 10AM – 6PM;
Sa: 10AM – 5PM
transport Tram 12; Bus 1, 5

B Bibliothèque de la Cité
5 Place des Trois-Perrix, 1204 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 32 00
email webbmu@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/bm
opening hours
Mo – Fr: 9AM – 6PM; Sa: 9AM – 12AM
transport Tram 12; Bus 1, 5

C Art and Archaeology Library – BAA
5 Promenade du Pin, 1204 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 27 00
email info.baa@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/aba
opening hours
Mo – Fr: 10AM – 6PM; Sa: 9AM – 12AM
transport Bus 1, 5, 8, 36 (stop florissant); 7 (stop Musée d’art et d’histoire)

D Natural History Museum Library
1 Route de Malagnou, 1208 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 63 25
email biblio.mhn@ville-ge.ch
web museum-geneve.ch
opening hours
Tu – Fr: 2PM – 5PM
transport Bus 1, 5, 8, 25 (stop Musée)

Tranchées – Eaux-Vives

E Bibliothèque des Eaux-Vives
2 Rue Sillem, 1207 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 37 70
email webbmu@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/bm
adult opening hours
Tu, Th, Fr: 3PM – 7PM; We: 10AM – 6PM;
Sa: 1:30PM – 5PM
transport Bus 2, 6, E, G (stop Vollandes)

K Bibliothèque de la Jonction
22 Boulevard Carl-Vogt, 1205 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 97 10
email webbmu@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/bm
opening hours adults
Tu, Th, Fr: 3PM – 7PM; We: 10AM – 6PM;
Sa: 1:30PM – 5PM
transport Tram 14 (stop Jonction); Bus 4, 11, D (stop Jonction); 2, 19, 32 (stop Sainte-Clotilde)

L Musical Collection – The Geneva Library
Maison des arts du Grütli, 16 Rue du Général-Dufour, 1204 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 35 80
email bmu@ville-ge.ch
web bge-geneve.ch/musicale
opening hours
Tu: 3PM – 7PM; We: 2PM – 6PM; Th: 1PM – 5PM;
Fr: 1PM – 5PM
transport Tram 12, 18 (stop Place de Neuve);
Tram 15 (stop Cirque); Bus 3, 5 (stop Place de Neuve);
Bus 1, 19 (stop Théâtre); Bus 1 (stop Cirque)

M The Museum of Ethnography Library
65 Boulevard Carl-Vogt, 1205 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 45 60
email biblio.meg@ville-ge.ch
web meg.geneve.ch
opening hours
Tu – Fr: 11AM – 6PM
Transport Bus 2, 19 (stop Musée d’ethnographie)

N Iconography Collection – The Geneva Library
2 Passage de la Tour, 1205 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 46 70
email cig.bge@ville-ge.ch
web bge-geneve.ch/iconographie
opening hours
Tu – Fr: 9AM – 6PM; Sa: 9AM – 12AM
transport Tram 14 (by appointment only)
transport Bus 5 (stop Hôpital)

Plainpalais – Jonction

J Bibliothèque des Minoteries
5 Parc des Minoteries, 1205 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 37 45
email webbmu@ville-ge.ch
web ville-ge.ch/bm
opening hours adults
Tu, Th, Fr: 3PM – 7PM; We: 10AM – 6PM;
Sa: 10AM – 1PM
transport Tram 12 (stop Augustins); Bus 35 (stop Augustins)

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Sa: 1:30PM – 5PM
transport Tram 14 (stop Jonction); Bus 4, 11, D (stop Jonction); 2, 19, 32 (stop Sainte-Clotilde)

M The Museum of Ethnography Library
65 Boulevard Carl-Vogt, 1205 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 45 60
email biblio.meg@ville-ge.ch
web meg.geneve.ch
opening hours
Tu – Fr: 11AM – 6PM
Transport Bus 2, 19 (stop Musée d’ethnographie)

N Iconography Collection – The Geneva Library
2 Passage de la Tour, 1205 Geneva
tel +41 22 418 46 70
email cig.bge@ville-ge.ch
web bge-geneve.ch/iconographie
opening hours
Tu – Fr: 9AM – 6PM; Sa: 9AM – 12AM
transport Tram 14 (by appointment only)
transport Bus 5 (stop Hôpital)