

AAFI AFICS Newsletter

ASSOCIATION DES ANCIENS FONCTIONNAIRES INTERNATIONAUX - Genève
ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS - Geneva

1st December 2023

Dear friends,

They made so much..., we can congratulate them. I've divided them into three parts, depending on the subject, to help you find the information you're looking for.

We invite you to visit our website regularly to keep in touch with your association.

https://afics.unog.ch/AAFI-AFICS_News_F.htm

We wish you a pleasant month of December.

For AAFI-AFICS, Odette Foudral

Events not to be missed in the New Year

By Evelina RIOUKHINA and Marithé HORVAT

This newsletter is aimed more at new retirees, as many of you have retired during these last couple of years (they say there is a generational change at the UN). As for “retired veterans”, they already know a lot of useful tips existing for retirees in Geneva and in Switzerland. However, we will be happy to share some news and updates.

For years the UN was our home (and still is), but in retirement, we do not go there often, and while for some retirement is a time to enjoy life, others feel a void, a great void, a missing link.

Do not feel lost! If you stay in Geneva or its surroundings, know that the **Cité Seniors** can be your new home or an island of activities and social life where you will always be welcome! We are indeed very fortunate and privileged to have the Cité Seniors with such wonderful staff, and the range of activities they offer is simply exceptional and constantly growing. And we are very happy to have a close partnership and collaboration with the Cité on many of them. This concerns not only the Carrefour

International, which the Cité Seniors generously hosts for the AAFI, but also other activities, and the Escalade is the most recent. We are participating in this activity, and we are happy to see an increasing number of former colleagues joining us!

Let us further deepen this sportive collaboration and strengthen our team spirit by standing up for our city Geneva and for the Cité Senior team in 2024 for the Grand Prix of Bern Marche, which will take place on May 18 in the Swiss capital. But preparation and training in Geneva will begin soon and will be hosted by the Cité Seniors. **Let's be numerous to join the team Cité Seniors !**

Do not stay alone for Christmas !

And one more important reminder for Christmas: **Do not stay alone for Christmas !** There are celebrations organized all over the city, at the Cité Seniors, and in other associations, districts/communes. And we are aware that some of you (of us) are totally alone. And it is not always joyful to be "adopted" by other families, especially during festivities. Do not feel lost, and do not feel abandoned, there is always a way out, and the association AVIVO proposes an absolutely brilliant solution: a day trip on 25 December for lunch. If you wish, book your place. You do not need to be a member - all the details are here <https://avivo.ch/noel-au-pays-du-mont-blanc-lundi-25-decembre-2023/> You can go alone, or you can go with your family and friends, it will be a very good meals and you will celebrate Christmas in a nice company in all cases! Of course, there are other places for a good Christmas lunch or in case the above is full, try to look around and you will definitely find something interesting. For cheerful atmosphere you can always go to the nice mountain resorts for a day (Crans-Montana, Zermatt and just have lunch enjoying mountains), or even take a day trip to Einsiedeln to enjoy the day in such a sacred and interesting place.



Partnership or participation/membership in other associations:

AVIVO



AAFI has contacted AVIVO for a formal partnership, details will be published on the web.

However, we recommend that you join this Association if you want to have a complete social life, to take part in numerous activities, to make excursions, etc. The association also offers legal consultations, tax assistance, and offers many other benefits. In partnership with the AAFI or not, also consider joining AVIVO as an individual. We noticed that some of you joined AVIVO after reading our Newsletters, and that some of you received invitations to join directly from the Association. There are former colleagues who are very happy with what the

association offers. Also keep an eye out for their Spring or Summer Hike Week, and if you like hiking, join these Hike Weeks. You will find all the information here: <https://avivo.ch/> , the annual membership is CHF 52.- (calendar year, starting in January).

GENEVE Rando



We approached the President of Genève Rando, who wrote us that she would cordially welcome all international “hikers” and all those who like to walk. If you can walk 3-4 hours, without big difference in altitude, choose T1 walks, and if you are ready to explore Switzerland further and can walk up to 5-6 hours – you can join T2 walks. And of course, if you feel that you can do more, you can take T3, but sports preparation will be required for such hikes. The program of hikes is especially rich in 2024. In winter you can join Genève Rando for snowshoeing and some walking trips, and in Spring-Summer-Autumn – you can join for hikes. Note that a particularly interesting activity such as Sbrinz Route, is included in the program of 2024. We did a part of this Route and it is fascinating, historically and culturally rich. If you feel you can walk as required, this is the hike not to miss. By doing this hike you will feel part of historic Switzerland !

Consult the programme for 2024:

<https://ssl.dropnet.ch/geneverando/activites/index.php?page=touren> And the information about Geneve Rando and on how to join is here: <https://www.geneverando.ch/> , annual membership fee is CHF 35.-

We will send this Newsletter to the President Mrs. Irmgard Flörchinger, who wholeheartedly welcomes us, so that she is aware that our retirees might join.

Other associations – MDA, International Ski Club, Swiss Club Alpine and more

MDA+50: There is one more interesting Association that proposes a number of activities and you might consider joining it. We have not approached them, but you can find out more here: <https://mda-geneve.ch/> There are sports, cultural activities, and hikes (easy) not far from Geneva, occasional excursions, language classes, and much more.

International Ski Club: we know that some of you are members of the International Ski Club (SGIC), and you might be willing to share their activities or to ask them to include our retirees. This club is mainly for international staff. The programme can be consulted here <https://www.scig.ch/>

Alpin Swiss Club <https://www.sac-cas.ch/fr/> . This is a renowned club, and it has a big Geneva section. All details on its Geneva section are here <https://www.cas-geneve.ch/> . The club offers many activities on a regular basis (at least, once a week). This is a club with long-standing traditions. We know that some of our former colleagues are members of this club. We have not contacted the Club specifically for the international retirees, but we noticed that the Club has a group for seniors. Please contact them in your individual capacity if you decide to join the Club.

What would be our advice before you decide: try to take a course or two in each of the above associations and then decide where you feel best, which corresponds most to your expectations. Very often, colleagues (or former colleagues) are members of several associations (for sport and cultural activities).

However, with a little nostalgic note: if a hiking (or sports) club can be restored within the AAFI... Of course, the best option would be if one day a hiking club can be restored within the AAFI-AFICS, as there was one in the past. If there are volunteers and hiking enthusiasts and you decide to form such a group, within the AAFI or jointly with the SGIC, please share this information. We think many would be interested in participating in the hikes, even if only once a month.

And of course, without forgetting to mention <https://www.unige.ch/uni3/> – **UNI3** – Université des Séniors – Genève. There is a rich program of studies, conferences, seminars, lectures, language courses. There are also guided tours (cultural, historical), coffee meetings, etc. Membership is required.

Exchange platform as an interactive communication tool

This is the best idea that came to us and became obvious - we need a **platform for exchanging information** - whether it be announcements about cultural or sporting events, hiking suggestions, looking for company for walking, hiking, studying, singing, theater, etc. It would be helpful and useful to have such a platform for international retirees – this is our firm belief. This will save many of our retirees from loneliness and feeling excluded, and it will help to stay in touch with old colleagues or create new connections. It will be a perfect tool for mutual communication. The Newsletters that we have been preparing throughout 2023 cover only those who live in Geneva and in the nearby area, while many of our retirees live in France and abroad. So, the platform can be a better communication solution for the whole family of our international retirees.

On that note, we are saying say goodbye to you. This was our last issue of Newsletter aimed at providing you with the most complete information on what you can do in Geneva and Switzerland and where you can go. We hope that you are now well equipped to organize your stay to the best and have a wonderful, sporty, healthy and culturally rich retirement. We also hope that you will discover Geneva and Switzerland, our beautiful host country.

And if you want to know more about Switzerland, particularly its Cantons that are far from Geneva, join us at Carrefour International in January, March, May, July, October and December at the Cité Seniors.

We thank you for reading us, for your very warm words for our previous issues of our Newsletter, and we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

Part 1 sports

1. Grand Prix of Bern Marche, Old City of Bern, 4,7 km – 18 May 2024

Training in collaboration with the Cité seniors:



After so successful training for the Escalade course, the Cité Seniors will host the training for the Grand Prix de Berne Marche in the capital of Switzerland Bern. The course itself will take place on 18 May, and will take place through the Old Town. The course is not long (4,7 km, but it is an important one) and we encourage all who

can and feel fit, to take part. We will also try.

As from 1 March the Cité Seniors will restart the training sessions at the usual location: every Friday at 2pm, from the Place de Chateaubriand (near Cité Seniors, in the Paquis). These training sessions are aimed at people aged 55 and over and are adapted to their level and age. There will be a group for the runners or fast walkers, and a group for slow walkers. You can choose and you will be happy in either of these groups.

These training sessions are free, and will be offered by the sports specialists, in the similar way how it was done for the Escalade. The training sessions are great, the atmosphere is cordial, and you will enjoy the full attention of the staff of the Cité seniors along with their hospitality. The programme will be posted by the Cité Seniors later, please watch their website. Let's support this undertaking and be part of it!



More details you will find in the new Programme of the Cité Seniors for 2024, which will be published soon.

For further information and subscription to take part in the Marche Grand Prix de Bern, for the Cité Seniors team, please contact Damien Filomen directly by his email: damien.filomen@ville-ge.ch. You may also refer to this Newsletter of AAFI, Damien is aware that we are breaking the news. (Damien is on the above photo).

Beyond the above important activity that will take a substantive part of our Spring, we propose, as usual, our sections **Sports and Wellbeing, Culture, and Swiss Traditions**. Please read below about some news and updates as well as about the events in Geneva and Switzerland not to miss:

2. Sports in Geneva – for our health and wellbeing

There are many sports events for seniors and almost every day there is a free activity offered by City of Geneva. We are giving you details below and we invite you to keep a close eye on the calendar proposed by the Cité Seniors. And there is a vast palette of activities within the communes (districts) or within the clubs and Associations, and also offered by the Cité Seniors for a moderate fee.

Activities such as « soft Gym », Qi-Gong and Pilates are highly recommended for seniors. Consult the programme <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/document/programme-activites-Cité-seniors-juil-2023-ville> and watch for a future programme.

Please note that the open-air gym in the parks is offered by the City of Geneva in cooperation with Atletico three times per week as follows (all those are free and no inscription required):

- [Parc Bertrand](#): every Tuesday at 10 am
- [Parc des Franchises](#): every Wednesday at 10 am
- [Parc Baud-Bovy](#): every Thursday at 10 am

As mentioned above, on Fridays from 2 pm to 3.30 pm – gym and walking sessions, along with the training for the Marche, offered by the Cité Senior at the Paquis (as from 1 March).

Tai chi is especially recommended for seniors for coordination, concentration, breathing, and general wellbeing. Open Club in Geneva offers free classes on Sundays at the Bains des Paquis (starting at 10 am), and on Tuesdays at the Grottes (starting at 7 am – early, but excellent course and many devoted participants attend the class). And in summer there will be free classes every Wednesday at the Bastions. Watch the programme of the Open Club. The classes of Tai Chi are excellent, the profs are fantastic, their programme is here <https://www.taiji-toc.ch/> (discounts for seniors, membership required). Of course, there are other classes and other schools of Tai Chi, in the districts (communes), and we have heard that all of them are excellent !



Tai Chi for seniors - classes offered by the Association AVIVO on Tuesdays by Eva Rektorik in the Salles des Asters, Servette 100. They are absolutely brilliant for seniors, and the price is moderate: CHF 100 for 10 lessons for AVIVO members, please see <https://avivo.ch/tai-chi/>

Please note that many other sports activities are offered throughout the City of Geneva on a regular basis by the Antennes Sociales and by Geneva's neighbourhoods. You can find information here <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/themes/social/actions-sociales-proximite/bouger-entre-seniors> : The address of La Cité de Séniors is Rue Servette 62 <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/Cité-seniors> .

Please take note that the number of activities has increased considerably for us. You will find all the information about them here <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/themes/sport/cours-sport/seniors> . Let's enjoy these activities, it is good for our health and for our morale.

There is a big flyer offering regular free sessions in different districts (communes) of the City. You will see what will suit you. And do not forget, every Sunday there is a "soft gym" on the premises of the Cité Seniors at 11 am.

3. Snow walking, snowshoeing and other winter sports

Winter is the time of snow sports, those to be practiced outside Geneva, usually, in the mountains and forests. Although some of them will still remain in Geneva, such as Nordic Walking. We have already informed you about the courses on Mondays at 8.45am and 6.30pm, and on Tuesdays at 9 am, where the "internationals" are particularly welcome (price CHF 5.00 per week for a six-month subscription, or CHF 8.00 for each outing, meeting point Place Mikado between Chemin Coudriers and Chemin Champs d'Anieres, info: Antenne sociale de proximité Servette Petit-Saconnex, 022 418 9790, asp.servette.soc@ville-ge.ch) – classes are offered by the Antennes and MDA 50+ <https://mda-geneve.ch/activites/>



No need for us to address those who practice alpine skiing, because all usually know the best and safest places for them. But for cross-country skiing, snow walking (or winter hiking) and snowshoeing we will recommend some places that you might consider visiting during this snow season:

- **St Cergue-La Givrine-La Cure** – these are the closest to Geneva places for all above sport activities. The places are easily accessible from Geneva within less than an hour, and we are providing the maps <https://romandieskidfond.ch/images/plans/plan24-25.pdf>, where you can see the paths for cross-country skiing, for snowshoeing and for the snow walking (randonnées).

- **Vallée de Joux and the Lake de Joux** – this is also one more interesting place that is not far from Geneva. Within 1,5 hours you are there. This is the paradise for cross-country skiing, and for snowshoeing, and some parts are perfect for the snow walking (on specially made paths, as marked on the map in the link) <https://static.mycity.travel/manage/uploads/6/26/381269/1/plan-espace-nordique-vallee-de-joux-2022-2023.pdf>. Please note that the lake gets totally frozen during winter months, and it will be interesting to visit it!

- **Crans-Montana** – this place is a paradise for all winter sports and has always a joyful atmosphere. Travel might take 2 hours from Geneva, but it will be rewarding – you will return in excellent mood, enjoying the beauty of the place, be it in the forest, on the mountain slopes (even walking on the Glacier of the Plaine Morte), or an easy hike on a huge golf field covered with the snow in winter. All is absolutely safe there and well prepared for all winter sports. The map for winter sports is here https://www.crans-montana.ch/img_up/DOC/1798c2094918c0e1da7ae334e431f29c.crans-montana-carte-hiver-2022-23.pdf

- A little bit further is **Loèche-les-Bains /Leukerbad** – where you will also find great paths, at the altitude of village, as well as at the altitude of Gemmi (2300 m), where specially prepared paths will wait for your snow walk (hike) or snowshoeing. And if you go there and stay for 2-3 days or more to enjoy the thermal baths in the afternoon, while making hikes and walks in the morning, the health benefits are guaranteed!

- One interesting hiking path is a little further, it is called **Aletsch Promenade**, and this is an approx. 10 km well prepared hike, with pink markers. We advise you to go there on a sunny day, and to start from Fiesch (Fiescheralp – note that the cable cars up to 2300 m are included in the Swiss pass), through Bettmeralp to Riederalp. While walking you will enjoy the scenery and on sunny days you will always be accompanied by the view of the gorgeous Matterhorn (and you will see that it is not that far from that place!). Closer to Bettmeralp you will go through a wonderful winter forest, and when you reach Riederalp you will see atop the Villa Cassel, which looks like a wonderful castle under the snow. Alternatively, you can shorten your way and hike from Bettmeralp to Riederalp, on a well prepared for a winter hike path. But if you would like to hike along the Glacier, it will be possible only from Villa Cassel to Moosfluh (or vice versa) and by snowshoeing. You can do it alone, or join a group with a guide. It is relatively safe if you follow the markers, but be careful there as the snow is deep, so do not adventure yourself on that particular path, without snowshoeing. However, along with the Aletsch Promenade almost 10 km you can walk and it is absolutely safe.

- Of course, it is the area of **Zermatt** which is absolutely fabulous all year round with its numerous paths. Some of them are very safe and you can walk on the snow paths easily and even alone (but still be always careful and follow the markers). There is a possibility to make a Matterhorn Glacier snowshoeing trail, but this should be done only with a guide as one part of the path is difficult. This is a breathtaking hike, the closest you can approach Matterhorn, but this hike can be exigent, and it is a high-altitude hike (3000 m altitude). You need to be well

prepared for this hike, and we do not recommend you do it on your own, without a guide (only in summer you will be able to do it on your own, but not in winter!)

As for the above hikes and snowshoeing, of course, it is better if you have company, but sometimes you do not have any, and the above hikes (except the last), can be done on your own. The paths are well prepared, safe (of course, precautions are always necessary), all you need will be to have winter boots with good grip sole, preferably a pair of crampons (in your rucksack to be ready to put on easily if you feel slippery and icy surface) and a pair of poles, and always follow the pink markers and not to go to any areas that are not marked.

Other place that you might be inspired to visit for the winter walks:

- The most beautiful winter walks: <https://www.loisirs.ch/dossiers/29864/ces-balades-feeriques-a-decouvrir-absolument-cet-hiver>
- Winter walks in the Swiss Romand with good restaurants after walks: <https://www.loisirs.ch/dossiers/21686/balades-gourmandes-hivernales>

A very special place to visit this winter – ZINAL ICE CAVE – a breathtaking experience you will never forget.

If you want to find yourself in a fairy tale, with the blue ice palace, then this hike is for you - to the natural ice cave of Zinal. We highly recommend visiting it this winter. **Please note that this hike can only be done with the guide.** You can choose the option you prefer; we will describe all the existing possibilities.



There are only three guides doing this hike. Two guides who start the hike early, at 8:30 a.m. (which means you will have to spend the night in Zinal), and one guide who starts the hike at 10 a.m. We recently did the 10am hike in a group of relatively young and sportive people. We found the hike itself breathtaking and the ice cave an experience worth having at least once in your life. The hike is not as difficult as described in some sources. And the cave can be reached easily in 2 hours of normal pace walking to the cave, and back in 1.5 hours of normal pace walking. Our group was walking fast, it was difficult to keep up with their pace, that is why we did not have time to rest during the hike, as the group waited for us and as soon as we approached, they continued the hike. That is why we had to walk to the cave (uphill hike) practically without any stop. But it was still bearable. The return hike is much-much easier. Thus, we confirm that it is entirely possible and doable within one day, if to leave Geneva very early in the morning, to be in Zinal by 10 am for the hike, and to return in the evening. It will be a long day, perhaps tiring, but full of enriching impressions.

If you prefer to go more slowly, it will take you 2.5 hours of pleasant walking to get to the cave, 1 hour to stay there, and 2 hours to return. At a slower, the hike

will not be difficult. The initial climb is considered to be difficult, but at a slower pace it is doable for everyone. And the path is very beautiful. However, the area is not protected and can be occasionally dangerous, as it is in the avalanche valley. It is therefore very important to check the weather conditions before going there. In addition, you should know that it is a natural ice cave (and not an ice museum), which is **why it is necessary to go there only with a guide** who knows the particularities of this place.

All the guides are here:

- <https://www.valdanniviers.ch/en/P123878/events/excursions-guided-tours/guided-hike-to-the-zinal-glacier-caves> - starting time at 8.30 am
- <https://www.valdanniviers.ch/en/P123882/events/excursions-guided-tours/visit-to-the-caves-of-the-zinal-glacier> - starting time at 8.30 am too;
- <https://www.valdanniviers.ch/en/P123884/events/excursions-guided-tours/guided-hike-to-the-zinal-glacier-caves>, starting at 10 am (the name of the guide is Daniel Ruppen, English/French), the group hikes usually scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays.

As this is an absolutely exceptional experience, we also encourage you to consider a guided tour with a geologist. This hike will take place on January 27, details are here <https://geol.ch/excursions-geologique/programme-sorties-nature/glacier-de-zinal/> . This hike will also be accompanied by Daniel Ruppen (can be also done in one day from Geneva!). It will be a little expensive, but you won't regret a penny spent seeing this natural wonder. This hike is only offered once per season. Just look at the photos (in the link) to get inspired !

Based on our experience, this hike can be done, depending on weather conditions, with snowshoes or without snowshoes, with good winter boots – this is how we did it (but consult the guide on weather and trail conditions). If you do not have snowshoes, you can rent them from the guide, who will bring them to the meeting point (usually the meeting point is the Zinal terminal bus station). Please also see the guide for more details.

This hike (to Zinal Ice Cave) is organized also by the International Ski Club (SCIG) on January 7, departing from Geneva, with the same local guide in Zinal Daniel Ruppen. You could ask SCIG to join. Here are the details: <https://www.scig.ch/ski-nordique-raquettes/> ; or e-mail: genevaoutings@scig.ch

You can also contact the tourist office <https://www.valdanniviers.ch/> for more information.

In case you have your own group of min 4 persons, you can arrange with one of the guides a hike only for your group, this means that you can go slower, and you can be flexible with the starting time. In case any of you decide to arrange this hike and hire a guide, please inform us as our retirees might be willing to join you for this exclusive, really exceptional hike.

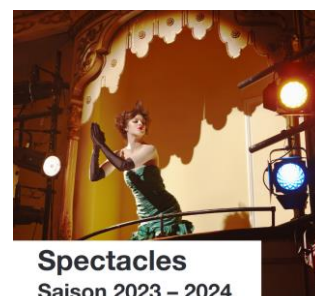
Part 2 Cultural events

1. Cultural events - concerts, exhibitions, guided tours Geneva

Sunday Concerts in Victoria Hall

Please consult the programme here <https://scenes-culturelles.geneve.ch/victoria-hall/concerts-du-dimanche.html> . The tickets can be purchased at the Cité Seniors, at CHF 10.-

Speclacles et cinema pour les séniors Ville de Genève



<https://www.geneve.ch/fr/public/seniors/profiter-temps-libre/spectacles-cinema> and <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/document/flyer-spectacles-seniors-saison-2023-2024>. The Cité Seniors also offers tickets for seniors to various theatres at CHF 10.- and CHF 15.-

The Association AVIVO also proposed to its members the tickets to the theatre and concerts. Please consult <https://avivo.ch/les-theatre-a-prix-reduits/>, and <https://avivo.ch/spectacles-et-concerts/>

For all cultural activities by the Association AVIVO please consult <https://avivo.ch/loisirs/>

Visits of Museums and other cultural excursions and/or visits for seniors by the City of Geneva:

<https://www.geneve.ch/fr/public/seniors/profiter-temps-libre/expositions-visites-sorties-culturelles>

Architectural excursions in the City by the Association AVIVO (Ballades d'Otto Kolly) – usually on Tuesdays, at 1.30 pm (different meeting places depending on the itinerary of the walk)- please consult the AVIVO magazines of September, October and November for more information.

Exhibitions – PALEXPO:

An important event – The Global Refugee Forum - will take place from 13 to 15 December 2023

<https://palexpo.ch/evenement/forum-mondial-sur-les-refugies/> with the

ceremony of the 2023 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award (access to both by invitations only, however both will be transmitted in direct on YouTube of the High Commission for Refugees).



Many interesting events will be held at the **Palexpo in 2024**, with the public access. Among those are:



- Swiss SWISSEXPO, the diary cattle exhibition that will take place from 17 to 20 January 2024 – event not to miss (for those who are interested), the details are here: <https://swiss-expo.com/>

- ArtFair will be held from 26 to 29 January 2024 – the website is: <https://artgeneve.ch/>

- Motor Show will take place from 26 February to 3 March 2024 – many of us love this event ! Please consult for the details: <https://genevamotorshow.com/geneva-2024/>

- Book Fair is also one of the favourite events, it will take place from 6 to 19 March 2024, details are: <https://salondulivre.ch/>

- Watchmaking Salon “Watches and Wonders” will take place from 9 to 15 April, and please note that the last three days, on 13, 14 and 15 April, the Salon will be open to public, details are here: <https://www.watchesandwonders.com/en/geneva-2023/event.html>

- Exhibition on Inventions will take place from 17 to 21 April, details: <https://inventions-geneva.ch/>

Other exhibitions worth mentioning (outside Geneva)

The Fondation Giannada in Martigny is currently hosting an exhibition entitled "Les années fauves", organised by the Fondation in collaboration with the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris. This exhibition will be open until end of January, hurry up if you have not yet visited it. As from 1 February a new and the absolutely “must visit” exhibition will take place there – of the renown Swiss painter Anker (this is the big celebrity, one of his paintings was published the last bulletin illustrating our article on the “Milk Soup that helped to broker peace”). In addition to the Foundation, do not forget to pay a visit to the Barry Land to see the famous Saint Bernard dogs, and make a tour around this lovely city, to see its Roman Theatre and its Castle Battiaz.



2. Social gatherings, coffee and playing, singing and dancing, and much more

The Associations and the Cité organise other events for social gatherings.



seniors organise coffees, and



Coffees by Avivo : "Le Bistro au Petit-Saconnex" - 3rd Thursday of the month and "Chez Lili" - last Friday of the month.

In addition, Avivo organizes dancing musical events and Zumba dancing. Those are especially praised. Please consult the monthly newsletter by Avivo for more details <https://avivo.ch/journal-espace/>

Avivo also has a great choir <https://avivo.ch/la-chorale/> (all Mondays at 2.30 pm).

Choirs also exist in other parts of Geneva, have a look and join. Here is the link to the Choir for seniors offered through MDA+50 <https://mda-geneve.ch/activite/choeur-mixte/> !

The Cité Seniors also has something to offer in this regard: **every Sunday**, after the usual soft gym, there is a lunch and a musical and dancing part. It is also highly praised by participants.

Antenne Sociale Servette/Petit Saconnex also invites to join in the Ludomicile games. Information: ASP Servette Petit-Saconnex, Rue Hofmann 8, tel 022 418 9780. Internationals are welcome!

Other events and thematic coffees can be consulted at: "**Activités seniors près de chez vous**" <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/actualites/seniors-activites-pres-chez-vous>

And a big programme for seniors is here <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/public/seniors/profiter-temps-libre/cours-ateliers>

The comprehensive programmes on the excursions and any cultural gatherings are here <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/public/seniors/profiter-temps-libre/expositions-visites-sorties-culturelles>

3. Carrefour International by the AAFI-AFICS at the Cité Seniors

Among other important meetings, the AAFI-AFICS (jointly with the City of Geneva) organizes a monthly "**Carrefour International**" at the Cité Seniors (usually the first Wednesday of each month, from 2 pm to 4 pm) and we encourage former UN

employees to participate in this event. Through 2023, we have completed a cycle of 10 discussions on specific topics, including Swiss politics, Switzerland as a member of the Security Council, the Geneva elections (Grand Council), taxation of international civil servants (retired and in office), volunteering and participation in Geneva life, etc. These discussions appeared to be of interest. The Carrefour International offers a unique opportunity to have open discussions between Genevans and former international civil servants, and we encourage more retirees to participate in these meetings and to be available for any questions Genevans might ask. Thanks to these discussions, we can strengthen the links between Genevans and international retirees, and this seems very important. Such “questions-answers” rounds are not yet in place, and in the meantime, together with René Guenard, we can offer discussions or exchanges of information and/or stories about the Cantons of Switzerland in order to learn more on our host country. We can prepare those every two months. Our proposals will include (tentatively):

- 10 January – Swiss Cantons, what they are? The foundation of the Swiss Confederation – the Oath of Grütli: Canton of Schwyz – Museums of the Charte Swiss and the “Forum of history of Switzerland”, Suworow and Muothathal, Stoos, Rigi, Hoch Ybrig, and also Einsiedeln monastery and its Black Madonna– the high place of pilgrimage (not to miss!), and the role of Einsiedeln in history
- 6 March – Swiss Confederacy cnt’d – Canton of Uri and Canton of Underwald (today Nidwald and Obwald) Willhelm Tell – the symbol of resistance – myths or real figure, Uri passes, Altdorf, Andermatt, Stans, Sarnen and much more
- 8 May – Appenzelland – two Cantons of Appenzell Rhodes (Rhodes-Interior and Rhodes-Exterior) – the most traditional Swiss Cantons, how people there keep their traditions alive, the capitals – Appenzell and Herisau, direct democracy and open voting in Appenzell Rhodes-Interior, the secrets of the Cantons (including the famous secret cheese), the place of the cover on “National Geographic” – we have been there! Alpstein, Santis, and much more
- 2 July – Canton of Glarus – one of the smallest but one of the most special and unusual Cantons, the only Canton that has a person on its flag. Who is this person? Sardona - the UNESCO heritage site for its unusual mountain layers, the capital Glarus, traditions and Landenmeinen, and not to forget about the true story of Anna Göldi
- 2 October – the Grisons, the biggest Swiss Canton, with its capital Coire (Chur), the oldest city of Switzerland, the Rhaetian railway (UNESCO heritage Albula-Bernina railroads and viaducts – Landwasser and Wiesen), its historical Bernina pass, the White Lake, the palms and the Glaciers, St. Moritz, Davos and Klosters, but also Disentis with its Abbey, and much more. And this is the Canton where they speak Romanch!
- 4 December – Canton of St Gallen, the history of St Gallen, its capital with its Abbey, the story of Gallus (St Gall), the Act of Mediation of 1803, the University of St Gallen (optional: other distant Cantons of Switzerland – Thurgovie and if times allows – Schaffhausen with its fortress Munot in the Capital and the Rhein Falls) !

And we leave open February, April, June, September and November for the meetings “questions-answers” between Genevans and international retirees, or to the round

tables on Geneva International. We do hope there would be volunteers to conduct any of those.

Part 3 Other info

1. Excursions, day trips, travels (in Geneva, in Switzerland and abroad)



There is a rich programme of excursions proposed by Avivo, we encourage you to join. Watch their web side <https://avivo.ch/sorties-et-voyages/>, along with their bulletin, and enroll according to your interests, budget, etc.

Similar events conducted by the City of Geneva, you will find all details here: <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/public/seniors/profiter-temps-libre/vacances-excursions>

There are also group excursions or tours proposed by other association, you may wish to consult Cité seniors where to address, or cross-check all links provided here for the excursions and travels: <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/public/seniors/profiter-temps-libre/expositions-visites-sorties-culturelles/randonnees-balades-parcours-decouvertes>

2. Other interesting events in Switzerland and the Swiss traditions

Christmas Markets



As it is the Christmas time, there are beautiful and impressive Christmas markets in Geneva and many parts of Switzerland that you might wish to visit and might not be aware of.

Some of the interesting markets will be closed by the time our Newsletter will be circulated, but most of the markets will be still open, some until 24 December, while others until 31 December, and even through beginning of January 2024 so you can visit any of those to catch the magic of the Christmas atmosphere. Here is the calendar: <https://www.myswitzerland.com/fr-ch/decouvrir/manifestations/manifestations-rechercher/?rubrik=fetesdelaventdenoel>.

There are many magnificent markets, and the market in Basel is considered to be one of the best in Europe. Here is all information: Marché de Noël de Bâle <https://www.basel.com/fr/manifestations/noel/marche-de-noel>



A special visit of the market in Einsiedeln is organized by Avivo 8-9 December, we informed about this visit in our previous Newsletter. If you missed the visit in 2023, try to do it next year, be it together with the excursion or simply during the week of the market (usually, the first week in December).

They say it is simply fabulous (the photo is above).

Belalp Hexe (Witch of Belalp Hunt) – a funny event in a beautiful historic place – 13-20 January 2024

In one of the previous stories we told about the Witch (real one!) of Belalp (Aletsch Glacier), and people did not believe us. And if you too do not believe, you can go there during the week from 13 to 20 January to see with your own eyes the event that is called the Witsch Hunt, and you can even hunt the Witch of Belalp.

Of course, today it is a sort of a costume and fun event, with a alpine ski descent on the almost Olympic slope, just have this event in mind if you are in the area.

<https://www.belalp.ch/en/experience/belalp-hexe>



International Balloon Festival in Château-d'Œx – 20-27 January 2024

This is indeed a fascinating event and worth attending. **Château-d'Œx** is a very nice village, close to Gstaad, one hour by train from Monstreux and worth visiting in any season, but for this event specially. Go there for the launching of the balloons and try to arrive early, as according to the programme the first launching is at 8.30 am on both weekend, on 20 and 27 January 2024. The full programme can be consulted here:

<https://www.festivaldeballons.ch/en>



There is a trip proposed by Buchard Voyage, here is the link :

<https://www.buchard.ch/voyage/festival-international-des-montgolfieres-a-chateau-doex/>. We do not know how it is

organised, we noticed that the bus will arrive later to the venue. It is simply a convenient bus from Geneva to the place, but we would visit it on our own and by train to make sure to arrive there on time. And yes, to be there on time you have to take a very early morning train from Geneva !

Carnivals/Carnavals in Switzerland



The end of January, the whole months of February and the beginning of March will bring us the time of Carnivals, and this is a good and well-established tradition in Switzerland. The most significant Carnivals are the following:

Rabadan of Bellinzona – the second biggest Carnaval in Switzerland (after Basel), its name is Rabadan, it will be celebrated for 6 days and 6 nights, from 8 to 13 February. The celebrations take place for more than 150 years already. More details can be found here: <https://www.ticino.ch/en/commons/details/In-the-reign-of-king-Rabadan-Carnival-in-Bellinzona/40339.html>

Carnaval of Luzerne on 8 February, the details of the whole week celebration are here <https://luzerner-fasnacht.ch/>, this is the third biggest Carnaval in Switzerland, and the main parade will take place on 8 February.

Carnaval in Coire (Chur), the oldest town of Switzerland and the capital of the Canton of Grisons, is considered to be the most enigmatic and secretive event, with lots of mysteries, and even magic. It is an important event in Switzerland, along with the Carnivals of Basel and Luzerne. It will take place there from 9 to 14 February, and might require your staying overnight in Chur (you will not regret it! And it will be a good opportunity for you to visit also the Rhaetian Railway Albula-Bernina part (especially, from Thulis to Filisur, which is included to the UNESCO heritage). And despite the fact that Chur is far from Geneva, please know that there is a direct train now Geneva-Chur. The details for the Carnaval are here: <https://churer-fasnacht.ch/>

Brandons of Payerne will take place from 16 to 19 February, the details are here <https://fribourg.ch/en/estavayer-payerne/events/brandons-of-payerne/>

Bernese Carvinal from 15 to 17 February, is considered to be one of the largest in Switzerland, and symbolize the Bear Liberation. The details are here <https://www.fasnacht.be/index.php?page=verein&act=news>

Biel also has a great Carnaval, when the Mayor of the City hands over the keys to the city of Biel to "Prince Carnival" for five days. This will happen in 2024 from 15 to 19 February, full programme is here <https://faschingszunft.ch/fr>

The Carnaval of Basel is considered to be the most fascinating event, and it is the biggest Carnaval in Switzerland, it is celebrated over three days, in 2024 it will take place from 19 to 21 February. Upon several criteria and its importance and authenticity, it is submitted to be included in the UNESCO intangible heritage lists. The full info on this event can be found here <https://www.basel.com/de/veranstaltungen/basler-fasnacht>

Carnaval in Murten is also very interesting, in 2024 it will take place from 1 to 4 March. The web site for this event is <https://fribourg.ch/en/regionmurtensee/events/fasnacht-murten/>

There are other carnivals all over the country. Look out for the news (town by town, or Canton by Canton).