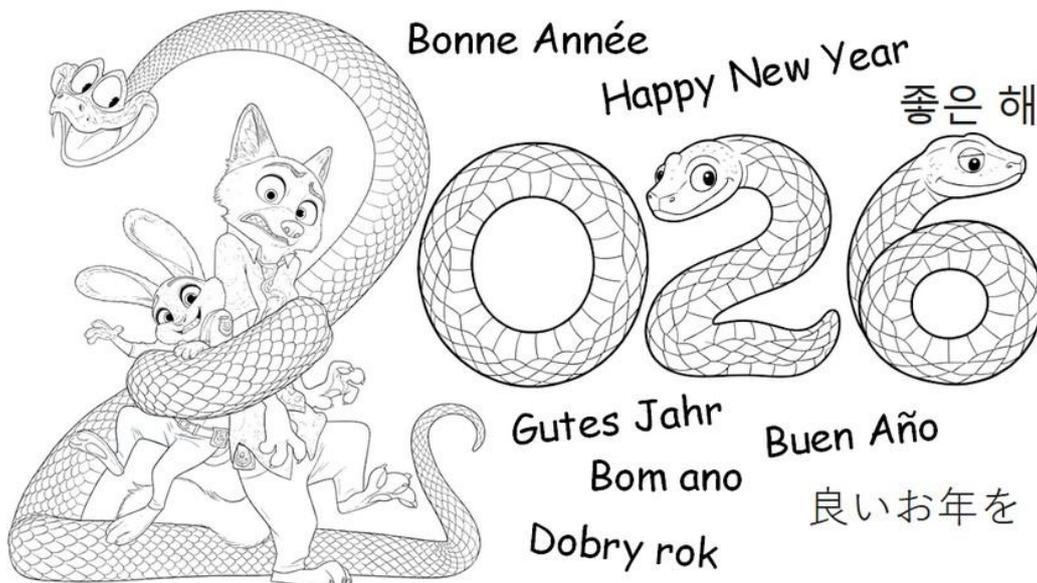


AAFI AFICS *Newsletter*

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

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Rappel : notre Bureau se situe maintenant au A-569

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L'équipe de l'AAFI-AFICS vous souhaite de belles fêtes et une bonne année 2026

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Important events not to be missed – January-June 2026

By Evelina Rioukhina and Gertrud Attar



It is difficult to write a cheerful newsletter in January this year. The month started with a tragic event that affected us all, as well as our canton, neighbouring cantons and our host country. During this tragic month, we stand with Crans Montana in solidarity. We express our condolences to the families who lost their loved ones and wish a speedy recovery to all those affected. The tragedy took the lives of many young people and left many more wounded with enormous physical and emotional trauma, including our fellow citizens, the Genevans. The tragedy is all the more shocking because it happened in one of the safest places in the world during such a peaceful and joyful festive time. But that is not all.

Crans-Montana is not just a village in the Alps; it is a major international mountain centre with an international reputation, and a kind of mountain retreat for diplomacy and international affairs.

Since 1990, it has been home to the Crans-Montana Forum, which focuses on economics and diplomacy and is usually attended by DGs. This peaceful town was also recently the setting for the UN peace talks on Cyprus, led personally by Secretary-General António Guterres in 2017. This place is well known to everyone in Geneva and beyond who works internationally, and some people feel particularly close to it in their hearts.

We stand together – the first meeting of Carrefour International at City Seniors: On 7 January, the eve of the National Day of Mourning, we held a large meeting at the Cité Seniors/Carrefour International, where we discussed and honoured the victims, showing our deepest sympathy. Some of you took part in the marches and demonstrations held in Geneva, Lausanne and Valais over these days. The UNOG and other international organisations in Geneva also expressed solidarity with the tragedy. This tragedy has hit a country that is home to many of us, or a host country for many of us, where we are privileged to live securely, for our children and us, and where such a tragedy should not and could not happen. This makes the tragedy even more devastating. We also invited our friends from Cité Seniors/Ville de Genève to join us in showing solidarity – we are a family and stand together.



Please come to our Carrefour International events, a remarkable initiative by our President, Odette Foudral.

The City of Geneva has kindly granted us the venue and time for these events, which will take place on the first Wednesday of each month. We will also be privileged to welcome an interesting guest, one of Switzerland's most renowned journalists, who will occasionally join us to share their insights and enrich our discussions. (More details on Carrefour will be included in the next bulletin.) Please mark the following dates in your diary: **4 February, 4 March, 1 April, 6 May and 3 June at 2 pm.**

Open Doors Day at the Cité Seniors – as mentioned previously, during our retirement, the Cité Seniors becomes our home, where we all feel welcome and well cared for. It offers a wide range of activities to suit all tastes, so if you are not familiar with it, come along to the Open Day on 17 February between 9am and 5pm. Coffee, lunch and snacks will be generously on that day. You can already access the new programme for the Cité Seniors here: <https://www.geneve.ch/publication/programme-activites-seniors-juin-26-ville-geneve>

As usual, we start our Newsletter with the well-being, which is crucial for us, the seniors.

1. Health and well-being through sport – let's do it together with Genevans and let's build a Team!



Fridays as from 6 March the Walking training will restart within the Cité Seniors, as of 6 March, as usual, every Friday, 2 p.m. at the Place Châteaubriand. This time, the goal is to make a Team of Cité Seniors Geneva for the Grand Prix de Berne. Let's show our unity and our solidarity through sport together. Unfortunately, there are not enough members to make a special AAFI Team, but let's be part of a strong Geneva Team. The whole country and beyond will be represented there. Mark the date: 9 May 2026.

Gyms in the parks: Please note that there are daily free gym and sports activities in the parks of Geneva all year round. Choose the one nearest to you, or attend them all: **Mondays: Park Beaulieu; Tuesdays: Park Bertrand; Wednesdays: Park des Franchises; Thursdays: Park Baud-Bovy.** All sessions start at 10 am.

If you want to do something more humanitarian, there will also be a Together Run/Walk, initiated by the International School of Geneva, to support refugees and help them integrate. The UNCHR was involved in the past, and we hope that they will support this solidarity event in the future too. (Note: the distance is of medium difficulty). This run/WALK will take place on 21 June in Parc des Evaux. More information about this particular run can be found here: <https://togetherun.ch/>).

The Tai Chi Open Club offers free courses. For those interested, there are sessions every Sunday at 10 am at the Bain des Paquis and on Tuesdays at 7 am at the Place des Grottes (an excellent course).

Hiking in the snow (either alone or with other clubs) – useful advice and safety tips

Winter hikes are very good for your health, whether in the mountains or in the pine forest. Breathing in the fresh air is great for your lungs. Try to do this as often as possible. Even walking in the Givrine for 2–3 hours will do you a lot of good.

The Grotte du Zinal is an interesting place that can only be visited in winter. We advise doing this with a group (the International Ski Club <https://www.scig.ch/> will be organising an outing on 1 February). You can also visit individually, but please do so with a guide, as it is in a remote area at risk of avalanches. There is one guide who starts at 10 am, and you can easily get to Zinal by public transport (the road is difficult). Our advice would be to go in the second half of February or the first week of March, when the days are longer and sunnier, and you will see incredible blue ice formations that look like something from a fairy tale! You can find the guides here: <https://www.valdanniviers.ch/fr/P123884/visite-des-grottes-du-glacier-de-zinal>



The safest hike, even if you are on your own, is the **Aletsch Promenade** (from Fiescheralp to Riederalp, around 10 km one way or return). This is a safe hike with an absolutely stunning view of the Matterhorn.

A safety tip for you all: for all hikes, we recommend using hiking poles to help you maintain your balance and get some cardio exercise. We would also strongly recommend putting crampons on your boots to prevent slipping and make hiking much easier. Even in town during snowfall, don't hesitate to wear crampons — it's important to avoid falls at our age.

2. Keep up to date with informatics and new technology



This is important for us seniors as we don't have our usual "help desks", but the City of Geneva takes due care of us. There will be free workshops at the Cité Seniors every month (check the programme), and PCs and printers will be made available to everyone at the Cité Seniors and in the districts. There are also courses organised by the City and different associations, which are often free or have a very moderate fee. So, rest assured that you will never be lost in a sea of new technology and that you will always be able to find knowledgeable help.

We would like to remind you again and invite you to visit or join other associations (e.g. MDA50+, AVIVO, Pro Senectute, CAD, UNI3rdAge), which offer a wide range of activities for seniors at a moderate cost. There are also numerous clubs for seniors in many communes. Ample information was published in the previous newsletter.

3. Cultural activities and exhibitions not to be missed:

The International Air Balloon Competition is an interesting event taking place from 24 January to 1 February in Château-d'Oex (weather permitting). If you haven't seen it yet, it's worth spending a day there.



Felix Vallotton – This exceptional retrospective exhibition of the Swiss-French painter is the first time such a representative selection of works has been shown in Switzerland. Do not miss it: it is only until 15 February in Lausanne. For details please consult: <https://www.mcba.ch/>

Fondation Gianadda renewed its exhibition with **L'art de l'empreint**, if you happen to be in the area, do visit it.

Other exhibitions in the Swiss Romande can be consulted here <https://www.tempslibre.ch/actualites/les-expositions-ne-pas-manquer-en-suisse-romande-12-amp#>

And of course, check out for all events in the Museums of Geneva

<https://www.geneve.ch/actualites/expositions-voir-moment-geneve>

and Palexpo https://www.palexpo.ch/agenda/?anne=2026&type_dvnement=exposition

4. Swiss traditions and must-see events of cultural and historical importance:

February–March is **Carnival** season. Notable events include Basel Fasnacht (on the UNESCO heritage list), which takes place from **23 to 25 February**, Brandons de Payerne (20 to 23 February), and Luzerne (17 February), as well as many others throughout the country.

A special event called the **Böögg** takes place in **Zurich on 20 April at 6 pm**. If you are curious about the summer weather forecast, this event can reveal it to you. The Böögg will be set alight, and the duration of the burning (which can range from 5 to 45 minutes) will reveal the weather forecast – the shorter the time, the better the summer will be.

1-3 of May – **Fête de la Tête de Moine in Bellelay** (if you have never been, we recommend visiting on Saturday, when there will be a free guided visit to the Bellelay Abbey, tasting and international platter competitions, for more details consult the programme: <https://fete.tetedemoine.ch/fr/>

3 May: **the Day of Gruyère**. This impressive event is not far from Geneva and you all definitely know the venue. For more details, see here: <https://fribourg.ch/fr/la-gruyere/evenements/fete-du-fromage-gruyeres/>.



The Cherry Race (Chriesistrum) in Zug will take place on Monday 22 June. Read the history before you go and discover one more surprise there. Visit the favourite place of Churchill, Chaplin, Audrey Hepburn, the Pope and General Guisan, among many others, who came to Zug for something very special: a piece of Zuger Kirschtorte. You can also visit the historic museum, where you can learn a lot more: www.treichler-zuger-kirschtorte.ch.

If you have an extra two hours, try visiting another place near Zug on Lake Ägeri. This is one of Switzerland's most important historical landmarks, dedicated to the Battle of Morgarten in 1315 – the first joint victory of the founding cantons following the Oath of Rütli in 1291. This victory resulted in the Pacte of Brunnen and cemented the Old Confederacy. This monument is not well known, unlike the impressive frescoes on the Mairie in Schwyz and the Museum of the Federal Charter, so if you are fond of history and want to experience it first-hand, don't miss out. It is both touching and impressive.

Federal Yodelling Festival – Basel, 26–28 June (see the article in the next bulletin). This year it will be more significant than ever before, as in 2025 the Yodell was added to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

Please note that most events in Geneva in June will be cancelled or reduced due to the G7 summit in Evian. However, the music festival, scheduled for 18–20 June, will go ahead, albeit in a reduced form.

5. For those willing to do more for the city:

If you feel part of the Geneva community or would like to build bridges with Genevans, we encourage you to attend at least our Carrefour International. But try to do more – get involved in the life of the city by volunteering. My colleague and co-author of this newsletter, Gertrud, has been doing this for decades. She is not only in charge of humanitarian projects in the Women's Guild, but also helps all seniors in Geneva. She is a true and dedicated role model (you could offer your services to Cité Seniors, IMAD or your commune).

This newsletter was originally written to be detailed and joyful, but under the circumstances, it has been rewritten to be brief and solemn, providing only an overview of the main or most interesting activities and information that might be useful to you. In May, we will prepare a more detailed newsletter to help you prepare for the summer, providing you with tips and advice for the second half of the year.



However, before saying goodbye for now, we would like to end this first New Year's letter on a more cheerful and hopeful note. We also took a trip to Appenzell AR to take part in an outstanding tradition unique to the area. It involves meeting personages (spirits) who will help to chase away all the bad things and welcome good luck for the coming year. We went thinking of you all and wanted to bring you hope and good luck. We are happy we did it, as despite the year starting so sadly and turbulently, we hope it will still bring you a lot of serenity, stability, and hope and light ahead.

With this,
We extend our very best wishes to you all for 2026!

Evelina and Gertrud, 10 January 2026