



22 August 2023

Dear friends,

Many thanks to Evelina Rioukhina and Marithé Horvat for the preparation and research to provide this new issue of the AAFI-AFICS newsletter.

We invite you to visit our https://afics.unog.ch/AAFI-AFICS_News_E.htm regularly in order to keep up to date.

Enjoy Summer time.

For AAFI-AFICS, Odette Foudral

Events not to miss - September - November 2023

They say that "all good things come to an end", which means that summer is over and the season of hard work begins. But for us retirees, the good season spans the whole year, and we also know that when one good thing comes to an end, another for sure will begin. In this newsletter, we would like to draw your attention to some interesting events that you might like to know about or attend and that are not easy to find in the agenda and programmes.

But first, our "**Sports and Wellbeing**" section, as this is the main one for retired people:

1. **Sports, health and wellbeing**



Many sports events will be starting in September, and we invite you to keep a close eye on the calendar proposed by the Cité Seniors. Many activities are free or for a moderate fee.

Activities such as « soft Gym », Qi-Gong and Pilates are highly recommended. These and other well-being activities can be found in the Cité de Seniors programme <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/document/programme-activites-cite-seniors-juil-2023-ville>

(pp.46-63). Please note that many activities are free, with no registration required, and that some sports classes are free in September.

Tai chi - free Open Club classes will continue on Sunday mornings at the Bain des Pâquis, in September from 9.15am and in October from 10am to 11am. Details can be found here <https://www.bains-des-paquis.ch/cours-de-tai-chi> (annual membership of CHF 20.- is compulsory). We took free classes during the summer at Les Bastions (on Wednesdays) and they were excellent. So we highly recommend the Open Club classes (Tai Chi and Qi-Gong, see here <https://www.taiji-toc.ch/> (discounts for seniors, membership required).

We also found the Qi-Gong (Falun Dafa) classes that take place daily throughout the summer. We took part in some of them. These classes are free. From September the classes will continue every Sunday from 9am to 11am behind the University (free). Note that this is a different branch of Qi-Gong, which has only recently come to Geneva.

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

Many other sports activities are offered throughout the city by the Antennes Sociales and by Geneva's neighbourhoods. All these activities will be presented at the Cité Seniors on September 13 from 10am to 12pm, with registration from September 14, and the "Art et Santé Seniors" project will be presented on the same day at the Cité from 2pm to 3pm. All these events are free, with no need to register. The address of La Cité de Séniors is Rue Servette 62 <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/cite-seniors> .

2. Hiking, Nordic Walking and walks :



Walks: A number of group walks offered by different associations, Fridays by Cité de Seniors, walks in the city offered by AVIVO, and some walks, even easy walks, offered by MDA. Take a look and decide what suits you best. Consult the relevant websites. For walks in Geneva: <https://www.geneve.ch/en/what-geneve/walk-bike-rides/themed-walking-circuits> ; or Walking for Seniors every Friday by Cité Seniors at 3pm; or easy walks/ hikes: *Marchons ensemble (Let's walk together)* by MDA 50+ <https://mda-geneve.ch/activites/>

Nordic Walking: A reminder for those who live in the Nations district: Nordic Walking starts in September, on Mondays at 8.45am and 6.30pm, and on Tuesdays at 9am, and "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).

Hiking: We did a number of hikes in mini-groups and solo during the summer, all over Switzerland, in places such as the Aletsch Glacier and arena, the Moiry Glacier and dam, the Simplon Pass, the Gemmi Pass (from Leukerbad to Kandersteg), and we went as far as the Rigi, Appenzel - Alpstein and Ebenalp, with the famous Aescher restaurant (featured on the cover of National Geographic), the Gottard Pass and Tremola, the Oberalp Pass and the Grimsel Pass, as well as the Zermatt Glacier Trek, with our aim at visiting historic sites or places affected by climate change (*NB: those of you who love glaciers or would like to see the Rhône Glacier - the source of the Rhône River, which flows peacefully through our Geneva, there is a sad development. Those of you who remember the ice grotto from your childhood may not see it again after this season. The ice cave has been crafted inside the glacier for 150 years, but due to climate change, will no longer be visitable. For those who still want to discover the mystery of the blue ice inside the glacier, feel free to visit it this year, until mid-October. In the past, day trips have been offered by Bucher, but we couldn't find any, so we can only recommend that you take the train to Oberwald, then the Postbus to the Furka Belvédère (check the itinerary before you leave). It will be an absolutely overwhelming (but sad) experience, with a short hike into the ice cave. The historic Hotel Belvédère Furka (of Goldfinger with Sean Connery starring) is simply breathtaking, although not operational. In any case, this is a must visit!*).



Some of the hikes listed above are demanding, but can be done in a group with older people who enjoy hiking and are not very sporty, but who simply love nature and are prepared to hike for at least 4 hours. To see the Napoleon route on the Simplon, and to follow in Stockalper's footsteps, from the Simplon Eagle to the Simplon Dort (starting with a visit to Stockalper's Palace

in Brig and then to Napoleon's Hospice on the Simplon), or the hike from Leukerbad to Kandersteg via the historic Gemmi Pass (ascent, of course, by gondola - this historic pass has been used by Mark Twain, Arthur Conan Doyle, Pablo Picasso and Vladimir Lenin) or the hike along the Aletsch Promenade from Fiecheralp to Villa Cassel, Churchill's Swiss retreat, or through the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Aletsch Autumn Forest - all of these are perfectly feasible and highly recommended. We will be sharing this message with the CSI (Ski International Club) and also with AVIVO to see if there are any volunteers or more experienced hikers who are willing to lead the group hikes once a month, and we stand ready to prepare the appropriate story to tell you along the way.

In the meantime, we are going to tell you about our recent hike to the symbol of Swiss neutrality, art of the compromises and diplomacy (it is located on the border between the cantons of Zug and Zurich, near Kappel Abbey) - we won't tell you more for now, so please read our story in the next bulletin!

3. Cultural events - concerts, exhibitions, guided tours



The coming season will also be rich in cultural events, to name but a few:

For concerts, take a look at the programme at the Victoria Hall, where there will be some great concerts <https://www.l-agenda.ch/lieux/victoria-hall/>

The film festival will also be held in Geneva from 3 to 11 November 2023, link <https://www.giff.ch/>

Three other events worth mentioning in this section:



Marit Fosse exhibition “Une symphonie de l’inconnu” (“The Symphony of the Unknown”): After a huge success in Paris and recently in New York, Galerie Trygve Lie, our dear colleague from the press, journalist, writer and painter Marit Fosse is exhibiting her paintings in Geneva. Her exhibition 'Une symphonie de l'inconnu' (“The Symphony of the Unknown”) is already open at 'The House of Arts' gallery (by appointment, until 13 October, Vernissage on 21 September from 6-8pm). Address: Rue Mina-

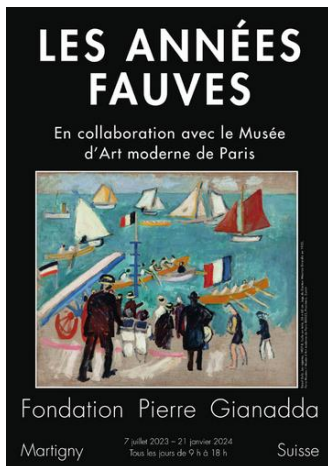
Audemars 3, 1204 Geneva; contact: thehouseofart@crgf.ch or silvia@crgf.ch; tel: 022 342 8234 or WhatsUp: +41 78 706 9643). For painting enthusiasts - not to be missed!

Guided tour of the Château by Anne Marie Wenger-Saladis: Our former OHCHR colleague Anne-Marie Wenger-Saladis, who has become a passionate guide, is encouraging us to visit the Château de la Sarraz in the Canton of Vaud, between Cossonay and Vallorbe.

She will be telling us all about the history of this castle and the 5 generations of the Mandrot family (great-niece of Gustave Revilliod, founder of the Ariana Museum, and the famous person who donated the premises for the Palais des Nations, as well as the famous peacocks !). Contact: am.saladis@bluewin.ch, the Château website <https://chateau-lasarraz.ch>. *(Of course, there are other Castles near Geneva, linked to the United Nations or ideas of peace (for example, the Château d'Allaman and its former owner Count Jean-Jacques de Sellon, who founded the Peace Society in 1830. JJ de Sellon was also the owner of the Villa la Fenêtre, now part of the Palais des Nations, the former residence of the UN Director-General. Volunteer historians are welcome to write their stories. We have also made extensive research linked to Count de Sellon, his Castles and his peace activities).*

Performing (theatre) arts - especially for seniors - new! We would like to draw your attention to an initiative by professional actors to offer drama classes for seniors, starting in September. We tried to visit the premises, but the theatre was closed for the holidays, so we are giving you the contact details and you can read the article in *La Tribune de Genève* <https://www.tdg.ch/trois-artistes-proposent-des-cours-de-theatre-pour-nos-aines-544354160895> ; tel. +41 79 945 48 73, e-mail:

clouxjulie1618@gmail.com . If you decide to attend the classes, share your experiences with us!



Outside Geneva, the **Fondation Giannada in Martigny** is hosting an exhibition entitled "**Les années fauves**", organised by the Fondation in collaboration with the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris. In this exhibition you can admire over a hundred works from French museums such as the Musée national d'art moderne Centre Pompidou, the Musée Paul Dini, the Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux and private collections. The exhibition will be open until the end of January 2024, so you have time ! There are also plenty of other things to visit in Martigny (Roman Theatre, Barry Land), so you need to plan your trip carefully to make sure you have time for everything.

You could also combine your trip with a visit to the Château de la Batiaz (<https://new.batiaz.ch/>) and also visit of the famous Martigny vineyard (<https://www.martigny.com/fr/activity/visite-du-vignoble-6551/>) with wine tasting ; and perhaps you will even take your own tour of the Dalai Lama vineyard (described in the last newsletter Vol. 82/2023). Martigny is a very nice town to live, and it is perfectly suited to senior citizens. This is a quick note for those wondering where to stay in Switzerland apart from Geneva - Martigny is the perfect solution (as well as Sierre, the sunniest place in Switzerland, or Sion). These are just a few ideas for the future of those who hesitate where to stay but do not want to leave Switzerland. These ideas can be developed and explored further. We are just giving you a few tips on places where you will feel at ease, where there is an international community, museums, and a cultural life, but at the same time, where you will be very close to nature. Martigny is one of such places, it is a crossroads or 'international vein' in the heart of Switzerland. If any of our retirees live in Martigny and have specific information about senior living there, please share it with us!

4. NEWS !!! Coffee-meetings as usual and new coffee-meetings - NEWS !!!



Coffee-meetings (organised by AVIVO): Please note that the Association AVIVO organises monthly coffee-meetings, and this seems to be what many of you miss. The two coffee-meetings are offered by AVIVO and our retired members are welcome to attend. Come to make new acquaintances or meet old colleagues and friends!

The schedule for these cafés will be as follows:

"Le Bistro au Petit-Saconnex" - 3rd Thursday of the month, 21 September, 19 October, 16 November - from 9am to 11am (address: Pl. du Petit-Saconnex 4, 1209 Genève)

"Chez Lili" - last Friday of the month, 29 September, 27 October and 27 November from 9am to 11am (address: Rue des Gares 21, 1201 Geneva)

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!

And as usual, don't forget the **Sunday get-togethers at the Cité Seniors**, with a one-hour soft gym class from 12.30pm, plus other lunches and entertainments.

AAFI-AFICS will also be holding its **annual lunch on UN Day** (you will receive an invitation at a later date).

Carrefour International at the Cité Seniors



Among other important meetings, AAFI-AFICS (jointly with the City of Geneva) organises a **monthly "Carrefour International" at the Cité Seniors** and we encourage the former UN employees to attend this event, especially from next year onwards. This year, we are organising discussions on specific themes, which seem to be a success. Next year, we are thinking of changing the format of the meeting, as these gatherings at Carrefour International offer a unique opportunity for former UN staff to meet the Genevans and

give them a chance to ask questions. We encourage those who wish to forge closer and stronger links with Genevans and to share their experiences to take part in these Carrefours.

Dates for 2023: Wednesdays - 6 September, 4 October, 4 November and 6 December.

5. Important dates in the calendar :

There are several important dates to note for your calendar:

International :



24 October - UN Day. We hope to participate in the UNOG Open Day and have a stand to present the Association and its activities. At the recent General Assembly, the United Nations Union proposed a special day for former officials. Some colleagues remember the annual meetings with former international civil servants and we hope that this nice and noble tradition will be re-established for us as soon as conditions at the Palais allow. We retirees, would be very happy to continue to feel part of the UN

family. The Palais is also our home and we want to continue to be part of it, to feel that we are welcome, that we are remembered and that the doors are always open to us.

Peace Day - this day must be specially marked, because peace remains our most important ideal. **September 21 is International Peace Day**, but note that this year's **Geneva Peace Week** will take place later, from **the end of November to December 3**. The event will be particularly important as it celebrates its 10th anniversary. The theme of the event will be "**Building Trust, Building Peace: An Agenda for the Future**", and registration is already open. As some of us are still involved in NGO or academic activities (lecturing), we hope to see many familiar faces during this week at the Maison de la Paix in Geneva. If you are interested, please check this website regularly for the programme and registration <https://www.genevapeaceweek.ch/en> . The week's events are free of charge.

Another important day is **1 October, the International Day of Older Persons**. This day is celebrated all over the world <https://www.un.org/en/observances/older-persons-day> , and it will also be celebrated in Geneva. We invite you to have a look at the events taking place in Geneva on that day: <https://www.geneve.ch/fr/public/seniors/journee-internationale-agees>

6. Geneva dates to mark

Of course, everyone who lives in Geneva knows them:



Jeûne genevois (meaning Geneva fast) is a public holiday in the canton of Geneva, which occurs on the Thursday following the first Sunday of September. It dates back to the 16th century. This year it will be celebrated **7 September**. Even if some traditions are "modernised", plum cake is welcome on this day.

And of course, it is the **Fête de l'Escalade**, the most important day in Geneva. **Cé qu'è lainô**, the anthem of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, tells the story of the Escalade. In our next newsletter, we will provide you with more information about the Fête de l'Escalade 2023, and will write you the lyrics of the anthem so that you can sing it together with all Genevans during the festivities.

7. And what about Swiss traditions?

We love and respect all the traditions of the country in which we live. And indeed, there are many, especially in September and October. We are sure you are familiar with most of them:

Cattle drive (désalpe)



Cows are the sacred animals of Switzerland and one of the country's symbols. Summer is a busy time for farmers. At the end of spring, they release the cows onto the mountain pastures, where they spend between 5 and 3 months (depending on altitude). During this time, the cheese-makers produce the cheese on the mountain pastures and in the autumn, the farmers bring the cows back for the winter. This is the most important event in farmers' lives and is celebrated throughout the country almost as a bank holiday.

We're sure you've already visited at least one of these farms, but if not, we recommend you do: **Désalpe de Charmey** by AVIVO on Saturday 23 September 2023 - hurry up and sign up for this excursion.

But if you don't have a place, don't worry, we will give you recommendations and a full list of the cattle drives (désalpe in French, Alpabgahrt in German). It's up to you where you choose to go, but don't miss this event and share the joy with the proud farmers and the no less proud cows, richly decorated for this occasion.

The nearest to Geneva will be :

St Cergue désalpe on 30 September - the programme is here <https://www.desalpe-saint-cergue.ch>

Désalpe in Etivaz on 30 September (unfortunately, on the same date, but you may be able to go to both places). The cattle drive at Etivaz is particularly interesting, so don't miss it. There will be free guided tours of the Maison de l'Etivaz and its cellars, almost every hour. These tours are very impressive. And if you are there, don't forget to buy some l'Etivaz à Rebibes ! Check out the programme here <https://www.etivaz-aop.ch/fr/la-desalpe.html>



Fête de Vacherin Mont d'Or in Charbonnière (also with the cattle drive) takes place on 23 September, and is a must for visitors to <https://www.myvalleedejoux.ch/fr/P1284/fete-du-vacherin-mont-d-or> .

We could recommend many other cattle drives (désalpes), as they are so impressive, but you can look them up here and choose the ones you prefer to visit. We've visited almost all of them. The full list is here: <https://www.myswitzerland.com/fr-ch/decouvrir/manifestations/> or <https://www.myswitzerland.com/de-ch/erlebnisse/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungen-suche/?rubrik=alpabzuegeaelplerfeste> .

Of course, the Appenzell event will be full of tradition and will be the most spectacular, for those interested, please check here for the date, in German only <https://www.appenzell.ch/de/kultur-und-braeuche/braeuche-und-traditionen/alpfahrt-und-alpabfahrt.html> , please note that it is far and you will need to stay overnight to see the whole event.

Two other events in this context:

Festival des Raclettes at the Bagnes 23-24 September, we recommend you go on 24 September, especially if you're going to Charmey the day before. The event is easily accessible and not far from Geneva, and it will be very interesting, with the 'crowning' of the winner of the 2022 Swiss Cheese Award, and with all the raclettes possible (as you may know, raclette is one of Switzerland's national dishes, and Valais raclette is a PDO (AOP) cheese, it has the same name as the dish). The website is here <https://www.bagnesraclette.ch> , check out the programme.



Chästeilet à Justistal (Cheese Sharing) - this is an event not to be missed (but will require some preparation, effort and even a bit of a hike (you may be able to do it in a day, but you will have to take the earliest train, or better spend the night in the vicinity of the event). You won't regret a minute of it, it is extraordinary and well worth a visit (but be prepared to come back with a bag full of wonderful cheese,

which may be shared with you, or which you can buy there at a minimal price, and the cheese is simply delicious). But the event itself deserves special attention. Make a note in your diary: 22 September 2023 (technically, there are shuttle buses from Beatenberg or Giswill, and then a 20-minute walk), unless you want to do the hike yourself (also a very nice hike) - 2h5 from Giswill and 1h5 from Beatenberg. We did both, and we highly recommend you any. It is an event to attend at least once in a lifetime. Please visit <https://www.interlaken.ch/en/planning/events/top-events/chaesteilet-justistal>

Other cattle drives, cheese and or related events can be found here <https://www.myswitzerland.com/fr-fr/decouvrir/manifestations/manifestations-rechercher/?rubrik=autourdufromage>

Other traditional Swiss events (not so far from Geneva):

- **Chestnut Festival** in Fully on 14 October (AVIVO is planning an excursion, check <https://avivo.ch/> and hurry to register, but if you miss out you can always visit by train).
- **Oignon Festival (and Garlic)** in Berne - 27 November (same recommendations as above)
- **Carrot Festival** in Aarau (well worth a visit, both for the festival and for this absolutely beautiful town - and when you are in Aarau Old Town, do not miss the most important thing - look up and you will see the secret and the splendour of this place). We noticed Buchard.ch offered excursions in the past, but we could not find any this year, and our advice will be to take the train with a day pass. The date of the event – 1st November 2023, event info and the city map are here <https://www.rueblimaert-aarau.ch> (in German).

8. Grape harvest - one of the most important autumn traditions:



Lavaux - UNESCO World Heritage Site. A special excursion to Lavaux will be organised by AVIVO on September 28 (please register at <https://avivo.ch/le-lavaux-jeudi-28-septembre-2023/>).

- ❖ **Nyon** (the website is here <https://www.lacote-tourisme.ch/fr/P8409/fete-de-la-vigne-a-nyon>)
- ❖ **Rolle** - The Swiss Salon DIVine will be held at the Château de Rolle on November 3 and 4, please visit <https://www.divines.ch/fr/> .
- ❖ **Neuchâtel** - the glamorous Fête des vendanges will take place on 23 and 24 September 2023, please consult the programme at <https://www.j31.ch/fr/P47577/a-faire/manifestations/fete-festival/fete-des-vendanges> .
- ❖ **Sierre** - Salon de VINEA in November 2023, see the programme here <https://www.salonvinea.ch>

All of the above is very "reachable" within 1 or 1,5 hours from Geneva, so all the events are well worth going. And as it might be a generous wine tasting, opt for public transport and go there by train !

9. Upcoming trips and excursions



We recommend that you take part in everything AVIVO is offering, from day trips to holidays travels and longer trips. For those who prefer to stay in Switzerland or learn more about Switzerland, watch out - an absolutely extraordinary trip is in the pipeline and if confirmed, the trip to **Einsiedeln** (photo above) will take place in in early December. If you get the chance to go, do so! But read

the story before you go. It is absolutely unique place. Also check the AVIVO Association for updates, and do not miss the opening date for registrations: <https://avivo.ch/>

And there may be a hiking week in October in the Saas Valley - follow their announcements!

Of course, there are so many other events and festivals worth visiting in Switzerland that our newsletter cannot describe them all.

Once again, we encourage those of you who are "veteran" retirees or who know more about events in Geneva and the surrounding area to prepare your own newsletters. We have found this website, which we consider to be user-friendly and comprehensive, and are sharing it with you: <https://www.geneve.com/fr/preparer-son-sejour/agenda> . We

hope you will find it useful and easy to navigate through all the events that interest you. However, if you have better options, please do share !

We regret that we are unable to prepare a page on France, and it would be good to have one.

Platform for exchange as an interactive tool for communication

What has become clear to us is the need for **the platform for exchange of information** – be it about cultural events, sports, etc. We will propose to integrate such an exchange platform into the website so that everybody can be continuously informed of all new developments. It seems to be useful to have an interactive tool for mutual communication.

Potential partnership

In addition, we believe it is necessary **to develop partnerships with other associations** (**AVIVO** is the most appropriate association for the retirees, in our opinion). We would also like to draw your attention to the **AFIS – Swiss International Civil Servants Association**, where many of you who are Swiss nationals, are members. And there seems to be a potential in developing further ties between the AAFI-AFICS and AFIS. In the next Newsletter we will try to let you know if there is any progress.

We hope you enjoy the many interesting autumn events, and we say goodbye until December, when we plan to prepare our next Newsletter. These newsletters were initiated to see if there is any interest from your side.

Finally, we wish you a very good start to the active season!