



WARNING

- Estimated walking time 2 hours
- You may come across inconveniences along the suggested route, such as an awkward road crossing, an uneven path, or an estate closed to the public. We are working to eliminate them; in the meantime, thank you for putting up with these temporary difficulties.
- Last but not least, the itinerary at times follows private paths. Discretion is required from the stroller, entering such properties under his own responsibility.

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FROM ESTATE TO ESTATE

The international city of Geneva boasts a large number of parks, walkways and gardens - many of them estates bequeathed to the community by patrician families - which have now become green havens of peace for the citizens.

Apart from the large parks bordering the lake, there are numerous other green areas, little known but just as charming, which welcome strollers.

For this walk, we wish to introduce you to the former estates on the right bank, covering some 52 hectares, and to disclose their history and related anecdotes, as well as some of their cultural and natural curiosities.

TO LEARN MORE...

- Armand Brulhart et Erica Deuber-Pauli, Arts et monuments, Ville et Canton de Genève, Société d'histoire de l'art en Suisse, Berne 1985, réédition 1993.
- Inventaire Suisse d'Architecture, vol. 4, Société d'Histoire de l'Art en Suisse, Berne 1982
- Guide d'architecture moderne de Genève, Payot Lausanne, 1969
- Les parcs de Genève - 125 ans d'histoire, service des espaces verts et de l'environnement (SEVE) de la Ville de Genève, Genève 1988
- Parc aux animaux du Bois-de-la-Bâtie, service des espaces verts et de l'environnement (SEVE), Genève 1994
- Conservatoire et Jardin Botanique, Genève 1990
- Rafael Matos-Wasem, Genève à pied, 10 parcours à thèmes, Slatkine, Genève, 2008

THE PEDESTRIAN PLAN COLLECTION

This itinerary is part of the Pedestrian Plan collection of walks conceived by the Planning Office of the City of Geneva.

- Walking in Geneva
- From estate to estate
Geneva - Bois-de-la-Bâtie - Jardin Botanique
- From site to museum
Geneva on foot - in the heart of its heritage
- From quay to runway
Geneva on foot - between travel and nature
- From city to city
Geneva on foot - from the lake to the Arve
- Walking Downstream
Geneva on foot - nature and technology
- From here and afar
Geneva on foot - between work and leisure
- From body to heart
Geneva on foot - urban planning and health
- From history to modernity
Geneva on foot - from local to international
- From cedar to cedar
Geneva on foot - between city and country
- Spirit of Geneva
Geneva on foot - of dialogue and peace

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- Arcade d'information municipale www.ville-ge.ch
1, pont de la Machine, phone +41 (0)22 311 99 70
- "Plan Piétons" website www.ville-ge.ch/plan-pietons
www.dimancheapied.ch
- Bicycle website www.ville-ge.ch/velo
www.samediduveilo.ch
- Info mobilité unireso (Public transportation - TPG)
www.unireso.com or www.tpg.ch
Phone (0)900 022 021 (CHF 1.19/min)
- Passenger ferry (Mouettes Genevoises)
www.mouettesgenevoises.ch T. +41 (0)22 732 29 44
- Taxi call centre, phone +41 (0)22 331 41 33 www.taxi-phone.ch
- Weather forecast, phone 162 www.meteosuisse.ch

IMPRESSUM

- | | |
|---|---|
| Concept
Texts
Translation
Photos
Drawings
Illustration (cover)
Design
Printed by
Circulation
Reedition | <ul style="list-style-type: none">City of GenevaFranceline Dupenloup and Town Planning DepartmentElizabeth FischerCeux d'en face, Geneva and Town Planning DepartmentEric VuichoudGilles CalzaCeux d'en face, GenevaImprimerie Genevoise S.A. Geneva50'000 copies / June 199650'000 copies / Mars 2002 |
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1 BATIE WOODS

The Bois de la Bâtie is a true Geneva institution; several generations of children have played there, eager for nature and fresh air. The name of this wooded hill stems from the ancient castle of Girard de Vernier, known as Bastie-Mellié and built in the 14th century. Two hundred years later it was a mere ruin. The park was created around 1870, and soon the woods became one of the most popular outings in Geneva. Here, nature takes on many guises: winding paths among the rocks, ponds with reeds, romantic woods, hilly meadows and, last but not least, a chalet with a terrace overlooking the Rhône, almost like an incarnation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's « Nouvelle Héloïse ». A splendid animal park offers every generation the opportunity of growing familiar with the local fauna, both wild and domestic: boars, goats, sheep, peacocks, horses, chickens, ibex, marmots, tortoises, and many other animals roam here in a state of near-freedom. The small zoo was opened just after the war, on the initiative of a park keeper who was in the habit of taking in wounded animals and building shelters for them. Redesigned in 1982, the park carries on the tradition and is a haven to many species threatened with extinction in this country. The woods also boast a playground, a large baby-pool, a football field and two restaurants. Enough to delight any town inhabitant eager for a taste of nature.

- *Contact point with the walk : From here and afar*



2 CAYLA ESTATE AND AÏRE AVENUE WALKWAY

The Jonction railway viaduct affords a beautiful view on the elegant classical mansion of the Cayla estate, located on the right bank of the Rhône, at the very end of the Saint-Jean district. The superb public walkway of the avenue d'Aïre is called a « mail », in reference to an ancient type of game of bowls. Planned at the end of the 17th century, it testifies to a particular organization of space which prevailed in Geneva for nearly four centuries. The best plots of land, such as those overlooking the cliffs of the Rhône which afforded exceptional orientations and vistas, were bought up after the Reformation by the city's prominent families, who established summer residences on them in the 18th century.

- *Contact point with the walk : From Walking Downstream*



3 NANT DE CAYLA PROMENADE

Also known as the Solitary Stroller's way, this walk follows the railway line across the Jonction bridge. There is a playground and a baby-pool sheltered from the wind, a favourite spot with the neighbourhood children.



4 THE CIRCULAR HOUSE

Built by Maurice Brillard in 1930, this building takes the unusual shape of a hemicycle, which is why it is known as the Rotunda or Coliseum. The configuration of the site inspired the architect for the lay-out of this unusual construction, characterized by the numerous bow windows and staircases marking the facade. The location of this outstanding construction also marks it out: its dominating situation over the surrounding area, the proximity of the railway line, and the conjunction of various urban fabrics.

- *Contact point with the walk : From history to modernity*



5 GEISENDORF SCHOOL COMPLEX

Built in several phases between 1962 and 1967 on the former estate of Surinam, the Geisendorf school complex embodies the educational concepts of its two creators, Paul Waltenspühl and Georges Bréra. A set of pavilions generously opening onto the park allows children to take their classes while watching the strollers and the changes of nature with the passing seasons. This concept was a radical departure from schools of the end of the 19th century, where pupils were kept well « isolated » from outside life in order to better concentrate on their work. Furthermore, the architecture of the Geisendorf buildings displays a broad range of natural and industrial materials, assembled in a such a way as to preserve the visual autonomy of each element.



6 GEISENDORF PARK

Named in memory of its former owners, this agricultural estate surrounded an 18th?century mansion and its farm and outbuildings. The plot of land was bought up by the City of Geneva in 1931. It has now been given over to the younger generations, with several playgrounds for smaller and older children, an educational centre and two schools. People interested in trees will be fascinated by the strange shape of a magnificent sequoia which was hit by a bolt of lightning.



7 DELICES PARK

All the celebrities of 18th-century Europe converged on the lawns of this park, famous for its illustrious past owner, Voltaire. Thoroughly charmed by the spot, the philosopher renamed his residence « Les Délices » (The Delights). He lived there from 1755 to 1765. However, the hostility of the local bourgeoisie drove the writer away and he moved to Ferney, a stone's throw away across the French border. Visitors can still admire the elegant mansion and the French gardens surrounding it.



8 VOLTAIRE INSTITUTE AND MUSEUM

« Les Délices », now the Voltaire Institute and Museum dedicated to the study of Voltaire and the Age of Enlightenment, is a tribute to Geneva's infatuation with country homes during the 18th century. Voltaire built numerous extensions for guest rooms and a small theatre between 1755 and 1765. They confer a strange and composite aspect to the entire property, which is a telling witness to the difference in mentality between the writer and his Geneva contemporaries. The latter seemed mainly to care for « appearances » in the rigorous layout of their facades and their abidance by the rule. The philosopher, on the contrary, privileged « being » by promoting in Geneva the establishment of a theatre dedicated to the progress of morals and the arts. The Voltaire Institute and Museum is both a library and a museum and was founded in 1952 to encourage studies in the 18th century. It boasts a rich collection of printed books, manuscripts and iconographic documents on Voltaire and the Age of Enlightenment.

- *Open Monday to Saturday from 2 to 5 p.m. Guided tours by appointment Library: Monday to Friday 2 to 5 p.m.*

- *<http://www.ville-ge.ch/inv>*



9 NANT DES GROTTES PARK

Once the « Schtroumpfs » (The Smurfs) complex was completed, the town created a green area here in 1994, following the natural lay of the small vale. The park is named after the now canalised Nant river flowing down from the Jura.



10 THE SCHTROUMPFS

Behind the railway station, the daring and original architecture of this group of buildings named after the Smurf cartoon characters immediately strikes visitors. It took some ten years to build the complex. The first section, rue Louis-Favre 25-29, was designed by architects Christian Hunziker and Robert Frei, and remains the most interesting architecturally. Split-up volumes, bright colours, varying orientations, combined with the different coverings and equipments which personalize each flat in this surprising construction, allow for a rather exceptional lifestyle in the heart of the city. The result was achieved thanks to the teamwork and imagination of every corporation involved. Concrete, wood, burnt brick, metal and rough-coating all merge in large flowing movements reminiscent of the work of the Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi.



11 CROPETTES PARK

Acquired by the city in 1873, the former estate of Madame Beaulacre welcomes visitors in a relaxed atmosphere. The upper part of the park is used by schools, while popular games of bowls are played in the lower part under the plane trees. Further down, the statue of a young girl mirrors itself in a crescent shaped pond, providing an added charm to the site. Plays and concerts are held here early on in the summer.

- *Contact point with the walk: From quay to runway*



12 BEAULIEU PARK and Geneva City greenhouses

This park really deserves its name: « Beautiful place ». Lebanese cedars (planted in1753), century old trees, cone shaped box trees, an alley of chestnuts leading up to an 18th-century mansion – former residence of the Sellon family and now a school -, everything in this noble old estate will enchant lovers of French gardens. Napoleon Bonaparte spent some time here in May 1800 during preparations for the Italian campaign. In 1939 the city of Geneva acquired the property, now the centre of a residential area. Part of the municipal greenhouses are located here. A visit to the plantations used for the ornament of the town's public gardens will delight all flower amateurs.

- *Contact point with the walk: From quay to runway*



13 BEAULIEU DISTRICT

Designed in 1939 according to a general development project of the Town Planning Department, then headed by Albert Bodmer, the Beaulieu district epitomizes the concept of town planning at that time. This large complex of block flats was initiated in 1947 and built on a former private estate by the Honegger brothers, among others. The concern for quality living in both private and public spaces is apparent here. The location is exceptional and the complex benefits furthermore from the nearby Beaulieu park and its superb alley of chestnuts leading to a large mansion built in several stages as of 1711 by the banker P. Jacquet.



14 VERMONT PARK

This park lies at the heart of an important residential complex in the shape of an amphitheatre, created in the 1950s. It is named after Vermont House, the residence Antoine-Edouard Aubert built in the second half of the last century between Montbrillant and Vidollet. A Deputy in Parliament, this romantic politician wished to commemorate the name of the American state where his beloved wife was born. Open to the public since 1964, the park is a source of enjoyment for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The need to maintain its original aspect has been the subject of endless discussions.



15 VERMONT DISTRICT

Built around 1946 by architects Eugène Beaudoin and Adolphe Guyonnet, this district is one of the best examples of Geneva post war town planning. It is characterized by a twelve-storey tower overlooking a housing complex of a thousand flats located in buildings of varying height. At the time, the tower was known to Geneva's population as the first « sky-scraper » on the right bank. Cars and pedestrians each go their separate ways here. Several differently oriented sections make up the facade, thus affording a lovely expanse of greenery – almost three hectares – for the enjoyment of the inhabitants. The lay-out is such that it offers an area which is healthy, well organized, and neighbour-friendly.

- *Contact point with the walk: From Spirit of Geneva*



16 VILLA RIGOT

The influence of French architecture was strong in Geneva during the 18th century, and can be clearly felt in the main features of this mansion: a single compact building two-floors high, a four-sided roof, axial symmetry, and a rigorous lay-out. However, the traditional distribution between garden and courtyard, a governing principle in private town mansions, was not applied here. The park, former estate of Varembeé, spreads out and down to the railway line. Today access to the park is currently limited, it is planed to open it more largely to the public.



17 UNITED NATIONS BUILDING

In the principles laid down in the international competition for its headquarters, the League of Nations wished their seat to express « the high purpose of a monument which, through the purity of its style and the harmony of its lines, would epitomize the peaceful glory of the 20th century ». The Palais des Nations was built between 1929 and 1937 by architects Henri-Paul Nénot, Julien Flegenheimer, Carlo Broggi, Camille Lefèvre and Joseph Vago. It answers the League of Nations' requirements in two distinct ways: the adoption of a formal academic concept, devoid of any reference to local traditional architecture, and the opening of the building onto the vast expanses of the Ariana park and the superb panorama of the Mont-Blanc, considered as elements of prestige. A extension with conference rooms was built later on, between 1968 and 1973, by architects Eugène Beaudoin, André Lozeron, François Bouvier and André Gaillard, assisted by Jean-Louis Ardin.

- *Visits: November to March: 10 to 12 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. (except on week-ends) April to October: 10 to 12 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. (including week-ends) July and August: daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Entrance located on avenue de la Paix (Pregny doorway)*

- *<http://www.unog.ch>*



18 BOTANICAL CONSERVATORY

This living museum presents the botanical universe in all its variety. The various stages of its extension since it was moved from the Bastions Park in 1904 can be traced in the building. It also shelters an herbarium, a botanical library and a world famous scientific institute. The buildings present an astonishing diversity: a 19th-century mansion (Le Chêne), a special conservatory for the herbarium (La Console), cold greenhouses built in 1910, as well as a contemporary hothouse and scientific buildings designed by Jean-Marc Lamunière. The « Green workshop » intended for children's and teenagers' gardening experiments is also located here. You will find it in the shed of La Console, which used to serve as a mere tool-shed.

- *April-September: Open from 8 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. October-March: Open from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Greenhouses: open from 9.30 to 11 a.m. and from 2 to 4.30 p.m., closed on Fridays Villa « Le Chêne »: Open form 8 to 12 a.m. and from 1 to 4.45 p.m. (except on week-ends)*

- *<http://www.ville-ge.ch/cjb>*
- *Contact point with the walk : From body and heart*



19 BOTANICAL GARDEN

The Botanical Gardens enable visitors to relax in the open air, learn about nature, and simply enjoy themselves. Created at the beginning of the century in the great botanic tradition of the time, these gardens, set at the gates of Geneva, are now a world famous scientific and cultural heritage of the city. Preserving plants and botanic collections, protecting the environment, educating and conducting research constitutes their fundamental mission. A paradise for all nature lovers, they harbour an arboretum, a horticultural collection, winter gardens, a rose garden, greenhouses, an aviary, a park for indigenous animals threatened with extinction as well as exhibition spaces. There is even a special « garden of scents and touch », designed for the sensory discovery of plants. The « Terraces of officinal and utilitarian plants » were first opened to the public in 2000. Under this elaborate name go known and lesser known plants which are used daily: in the preparation of foodstuffs (colourings, spices, etc.), of medication, of perfumes and textiles. The « Botanicum », an area specifically planned for families, created in 2001, provides a wide range of activities focussing on playful and sensory interactions with the vegetal world. A playground for small children, a refreshment bar and a picnic area welcome guests in an idyllic setting. An area devoted to beauty, leisure and learning, the Botanic Gardens would no doubt have enchanted Jean-Jacques Rousseau!

- *April-September: Open from 8 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. October-March: Open from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Greenhouses: Open from 9.30 to 11 a.m. and from 2 to 4.30 p.m., closed on Fridays*

- *<http://www.ville-ge.ch/cjb>*
- *Contact point with the walk: From body and heart*



20 THE RUINS OF THE PRIORY OF SAINT-JEAN

This Benedictine monastery was built in the 12th century downstream from Saint Gervais on the banks of the Rhône, near the spot where a miracle is said to have taken place: according to the Life of the Fathers of the Jura two lepers living in a cave were healed by Saint Romain. This legend probably explains why, in the 6th century, the monks of Saint-Jean Les Grottes (Saint John of the Caves), better known as Saint-Jean Hors les Murs (Saint John Outside the Walls), settled in the comb of the cliff, far away from any path. The archaeological walk takes you round the Roman and Gothic remains of this pilgrimage place, one of the most important monasteries in the area up to its destruction after the Reformation. It controlled the entire plateau which is now a district bearing the same name.

- *Contact point with the walk: Walking downstream*



21 PRIORY OF SAINT-JEAN GARDEN

This haven of peace at the very end of the Sous-Terre (literally « Underground ») bridge, on the right bank of the Rhône, takes you back to the Middle Ages. In the ruins of the former priory of Saint John nestles a cloister garden adorned with shrubs and medicinal herbs; it provides a delightfully quiet spot for meditation and contemplation.

- *Contact point with the walk: Walking downstream*



22 PATH OF THE CLIFFS OF SAINT-JEAN

This walk is an ideal way of immersing oneself in the kind of musings dear to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The cliff path follows the bank of the Rhône from the Priory of Saint John to the Jonction bridge. The wild and romantic environment will stir the imagination of strollers, while geology enthusiasts can admire the cliffs carved out during the late ice age and the sheer moraine of Saint John. The spectacular merging of the crystal green Rhône and the brown waters of the Arve is not to be missed and can be watched from the bridge. From the bank one can join the Solitary Stroller's way.

- *Contact point with the walk: Walking downstream*



23 WARENS PROMENADE

Overhanging the right bank of the Rhône, this beautiful promenade is named after the Lord of Warens, a nobleman living at the beginning of the 18th century. As history goes, his wife left him and settled in Annecy. She then moved to Chambéry, where she was later to give shelter to a young man of sixteen who had also fled from Geneva: Jean-Jacques Rousseau!