

ECIS 2007 – Geneva Local Travel Hints

Arrival and Getting Around

Free shuttle buses: Monday, September 10, busses will circulate every 20 min from the airport to the conference centre (CICG) and back. The busses depart 11:00, 11:20, 11:40, 12:00, 12:20, 12:40, and 13:00. When leaving the baggage claim area upon arrival at the airport, watch for a person with the sign ECIS 2007. He or she will help you to find the bus. The busses depart on the airport arrival level (see airport map, level – 1, between Taxis and Autocars). The busses are marked with “ECIS 2007”. They are free for all ECIS 2007 participants, but have a hard-copy of your registration confirmation ready, as it serves as your ticket. Same service will be offered on Friday, September 14, 12:15-14:15 from the conference centre to the airport.

Public bus: The city bus 10 circulates between the airport and the main train station (Gare Cornavin). They depart every 10 minutes on the departure level of the airport (see airport map, level 0). You must get a ticket from the ticket machine before departure. Press the button “Tarif Tout Genève” and pay with coins CHF 3.00 or Euro 2.00. The machine gives no change, and there are no tickets sold on bus. The trip takes about 20 min.

Taxi: Service offered from the airport departure level (level –1). A trip to the main train station (Gare Cornavin) or the Conference Centre (Centre International de Conférence Genève, CICG, 17 rue de Varembé) costs about CHF 20 – 30 and it takes 10 – 20 min depending of the traffic. Tipping is not necessary, but happily accepted. The drivers are generally honest and take the shortest route, also with obvious foreigners.

Free public transport: Booking any hotel room in Geneva entitles you for a pass for all public transport in the Geneva area during the same period. You receive the pass in your hotel. Geneva has an excellent public transport system, and since it is free for you, there is no point trying anything else. Most lines operate between 6:00 until 24:00. To commute between the conference center (Nations) and the main train station (Gare Cornavin) take the tram No. 13 or 15. The fun part is that boats are part of the network (Lines M1–M4). Taxis are available, but they are relatively expensive. Finally, Geneva is relatively small, and you can easily walk.

Logistics

Language: The local language is French. Nevertheless, you can communicate in English more or less easily everywhere. On request, restaurants normally offer menus in English. Spanish and Italian might also work.

Weather: During September the weather is usually mild and dry, with daily temperatures 10–20°C. Nevertheless, an umbrella might be useful.

Electrical Power: The power is 220V / 50 Hz as in other places in Europe, but the plugs might pose problems. If you have a two-pole plug, that one usually fits, but the grounded three-pole plug is different. There might be an EU socket in the hotel, but if not, you need an adapter. You may get one cheaply in the store called Interdiscount. There is one at the departure level at the airport (level 1), or in the city centre at Rue Coutance 7 or Rue de la Croix-d'Or 4. Adapters will be available in the conference centre for presentations only.



Parking: Parking in Geneva is scarce and expensive. Reasonably priced long term parking is available at the airport (hall P51) for CHF 85 per week. Similar or higher rates apply in other city parking areas. Hotels may also offer reasonably priced parking. Limited number of parking places will be available at the conference centre for CHF 8 per day – a bargain! They can be rented at the conference registration desk on a first-come first-served basis. Far away from the city centre, you can find *white* parking places for free. Be careful with *blue* parking places, unless you park for less than one hour and you do indicate the arrival hour inside your car. Avoid any parking marked with “propriété privé” (private property). Towing might be astonishingly fast.

Currency: The Swiss currency is the Swiss Franc (CHF). Currently, CHF 1.0 is about €0.60. The good places to exchange money are the main train station (Gare Cornavin) or the airport. Banks usually charge substantial fees. With most bank cards, you can also obtain money from cash machines. Euro is often also accepted in restaurants and stores. You will normally get a fair exchange rate and the change in CHF back. Credit cards or Eurocard are accepted throughout.

Public Safety: Geneva's city centre is reasonably safe. Mugging incidents do happen, but rarely. Still, use your common sense as in other big cities: Do not count your money openly in the street, hide the conference badge outside the conference centre, pretend not to be lost, and avoid empty side streets, especially at nighttimes. Police can be called at 117 from any public phone or from your portable, and they may come quickly. The highest risk you run is pick pocketing, especially in crowds. Be also careful when helping strangers in the streets, as you might be the target of a theft-trick. Clearly, leave absolutely *nothing* in a parked car, especially with a foreign license plate.

Drinking Water: Water from the municipal water supply is excellent, sometimes better than bottled water you buy in stores. On public fountains better watch for the sign "eau potable" (drinking water).

Little leisure

Short walk around the lake, and the old town: The lake shores are pretty and made for strolls. Visit the parks (Jardin Anglais or Perle du Lac) and the "Jet d'Eau", the sizeable Geneva's water fountain. Make a detour through the old town, dominated by the St. Pierre cathedral.

Longer walk around the lake, the rivers, and the old town: Extend your walk to the Jonction, a unique place where the Rhone river, coming from the lake, and the wild river Arve, coming from the Mont Blanc, meet. Continue along the Arve river, cross the Plainpalais, and pass the reformers wall. This place commemorates the most important event in Geneva's history: The reformation in 1535. Since, Geneva is mainly protestant. For this reason, Geneva now belongs to Switzerland, whose cities were equally protestant.

Shopping district: Les Rues Basses is the place where people shop. You will find many watchmakers, a craftsmanship that is blossoming again, particularly in Geneva. You find watches for every budget, from CHF 20 all the way to 2M. In the ground floor of the store "Globus" you get decent sample of the lower category. Returning to the main train station, you find also many stores in the streets Mt. Blanc, Chantepoulet, rue Rousseau, mainly aiming tourists. Usual opening hours are weekdays 9:00-19:00, Thursday 9:00-21:00, Saturday 9:00-18:00, and closed on Sundays.

Trip to the Salève: If you have a half a day to spare and the weather is nice, make a trip to the Salève. From the main train station take the bus No. 8 direction "Veyrier douane" all the way to the last stop. Walk about 5 min to the cable car (Téléphérique du Salève, opening hours 9:30-19:00, €10.50 roundtrip). The cables help find it, in case. From the upper station of the cable car, walk about 30 min to the top. The view of the Alps and the Geneva and Annecy basins with the two lakes is unique, especially when the visibility is good. Return the same way back. Note that you need a valid passport and visa, since you are crossing the French-Swiss border.

River Rafting: Another option for a half-day is rafting on the Arve river. There are three descents daily (10:00, 14:00 and 17:00), meeting point 8, quai des Vernets. Take tram 15 or 17 to the station "Acacias". Reservation necessary at 0041 793014140. Costs €50 per person, see also <http://www.rafting.ch/>.

Museums: You might be interested in the Museum of Arts and History, Rue Charles Galland 2, opening hours 10:00-17:00, closed Mondays, or the Patek Philippe Museum, Rue des Vieux-Grenadiers 7, opening hours 14:00-18:00, closed Sundays and Mondays.

Further hints concerning restaurants, food, and night life will be available at the registration desk.