



NEIGHBOURHOOD

QUARTIER DES BAINS, GENEVA

WORDS AND IMAGES: GEOFF BROKATE





Emirates began its non-stop daily service to Geneva in 2011. Emirates also flies twice daily to Zurich, with one Emirates A380 service daily. Starting October 1, both Zurich flights will be operated by the A380.

Although often better known for its diplomats and bankers, Geneva's art district, Quartier des Bains, is putting the city on the map as an essential destination for international artists and collectors. A local secret for some time, the rest of the world is starting to pay attention to Europe's very own SoHo.

Bordered to the north by the Rhone River and the Arve River to the south, Quartier des Bains, was once a working

class area and you can still find traces of its history as you pass its restored workshops and factories, reinvented as imposing art galleries.

In 2004 three gallery owners, who were struggling to tempt artists of international standing to exhibit in the city, established the Quartier Des Bains Association. Now the area has been reinvigorated and is home to 20 bustling galleries and six huge cultural institutions.

The boutiques of the area strive to break down barriers between art, life, design, entertainment, relaxation and even grooming by creating an all-encompassing space where disciplines and activities overlap and feed into each other. Specially designed furniture folds up and wheels away so that salons can be transformed into catwalk runways, while painters create in working studios that are woven into the life and soul of shop floors.





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ETHNOGRAPHY MUSEUM OF GENEVA (MEG)



Surrounded by rows of indistinguishable apartments, this building is a startling and impressive display of modern architecture. In line with the philosophy of the area, the museum offers visitors an entire experience. You can browse for books in its vast library, or relax in the music lounge where you can listen to the sounds of instruments from around the world, or take in the remarkable permanent collection that houses thousands of cultural objects. MEG's goal of illustrating the cultural diversity of the five continents takes visitors on an illuminating journey, from traditional Inuit life to the battle armour of the Samurai, from the domestic minutiae of handcrafted butter moulds from 18 century Switzerland to the imposing sentinels of Native American totem poles.

Boulevard Carl-Vogt 65-67, Geneva | +41 22 418 45 50 | meg-geneve.ch

LES FLEURS DE FRIDA



This store, a homage in name and décor to the infamous Mexican artist and icon Frida Kahlo, is a kaleidoscopic antithesis to the sparse, minimalist galleries of the area. It's a quaint and welcoming boutique and studio where you can watch the resident artist,

Florence De Barros, bring her luscious paintings to life. Originally an artist studio, the store has developed around this lively creative hub. It opened in late 2014 and it is embracing the district's philosophy of ensuring that the buyer receives an experience, not simply a transaction. Here visitors can buy unique objets d'art by local artisans, handcrafted clothing and jewellery and it's the only place in des Bains where you can pick up an original yet affordable piece of art.

Boulevard St-Georges 52, Geneva | +41 22 557 42 38 | lesfleursdefrida.ch





ART AND PUBLIC



This unassuming gallery lies at the heart of des Bains. Owned by Peirre Huber, one of the founding members of the Quartier des Bains, and established in 1984 the gallery has exhibited such artists as modern masters Nan Goldin and Cindy Sherman. In its current form it has become a pioneer in Asian art and has been integral in the rise of Asian art's popularity in the west. The gallery has given special attention to Zhang Wei, who makes celebrity collages out of Chinese facial features. It's also the place to go for advice and guidance for aspiring and established art collectors. If you're hoping for Huber's expert opinion, you may need to make an appointment as he is currently working on a museum in China that will permanently house his own private collection.

Rue des Bains 34, Geneva | +41 22 418 45 30 | artpublic.ch

ATELIER DES BAINS



An offshoot of the family-owned Cafe Des Bains, this contemporary urban gallery is born out of collaboration by the brothers Nicolas and Arnaud Hubert. The first urban art gallery in Geneva, the brothers are bringing popular international artists to the city. With thousands of people descending on their openings, their urban and street art gallery is proving a huge success. The gallery is dedicated to supporting artists through creating residencies, which enable the buyer to meet the artist and gain an insight into the work that's on display. The gallery also offers a chance to buy original lithographs through an online store called Print Them All but these traditionally printed works are selling out fast, as collectors leap at the chance to own an authorised print by these cult artists.

Rue des Bains 22, Geneva | +41 22 320 51 70 | atelierdesbains.com



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LE BAL DES CREATEURS



The installation by Scottish artist, Robert Montgomery, in Geneva's first concept store makes it clear that this is no ordinary beauty salon. Established with the goal of bringing people from diverse disciplines and backgrounds together, this hairdressers with a difference houses a bar, library and video installation, and can be transformed into a photography gallery or a space for fashion shows. Founded by the ex-artistic director of Chanel, Christophe Durand, the space manages to maintain the delicate balance between being almost unbelievably cool yet staying pretension free. Le Bal des Createurs has its own radio station and holds regular exhibitions and artistic events. As if that wasn't enough to pack into one space, you can always go down into the basement for an excellent massage.

Rue de l'Arquebuse 25, Geneva | +41 22 320 00 55 | lebaldescreateurs.com

LE CAFE DE LA PRESSE



The current owner, Mehrez Agrebi, took over the café in 1984, which was then a popular journalist haunt as there were three major newspapers based in the area. The wedge shape of the building is reminiscent of New York's Flatiron Building and, as a result, customers are afforded 180-degree views of the neighbourhood. On the edge of des Bains, Le Café de la Presse is popular by day with the workers of the area, while by night its sister restaurant, Le Reservoir, fills up with bearded hipsters and carefully tousled fashionistas eager to make the most of the quarter's vibrant atmosphere. Le Reservoir hosts events, theme nights and live music, and is the place to go in des Bains for entertainment that lasts until the early hours of the morning.

Boulevard Saint-Georges 62-64, Geneva | +41 22 320 62 99 | le-reservoir.ch





NEIGHBOURHOOD

CAFE DES BAINS



Originally an old bookstore, Café des Bains is now a sleek venue with contemporary art on the walls. This conglomeration of entwined yet distinct spaces are home to one of the finest restaurants in Geneva, a hip bar that doubles as a breakfast buffet, pavement terrace at the front and a decked patio garden to the rear that comes to life when the sun shines. The lunch menu changes daily with seasonal ingredients and the dinner cuisine is a modern fusion, artistically presented with an emphasis on colour. Not content to rest on their laurels, the innovative owners are planning to create a unique, all inclusive boutique hotel where the restaurant's chefs cook and serve your food in the seclusion and luxury of your room.

Rue des Bains 26, Geneva | +41 22 321 57 98 | cafedesbains.com

PLAINPALAIS FLEA MARKET



This is one of Switzerland's largest markets, running every Sunday since 1970. It takes place in the local showground that also houses a large skate park. Its food section offers a delectable range of fresh produce from regional farmers, while there is stall after stall of international street food that you can eat as you stroll. The wide variety of cuisines reflects the cultural mix of the city. Skip from tempting German sweets, hearty Uruguayan chivitos (a traditional sandwich dish), colourful Indian spices and delicate French pastries. After your stomach is satisfied move on to the booksellers, jewellery, reduced designer brands, shoes and bags. It's a great place to delve into the local atmosphere and prepare for a long day of gallery hopping.

Plaine de Plainpalais, Geneva

