

Unforgettable holidays in the lake of Geneva region

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UNFORGETTABLE HOLIDAYS IN THE LAKE OF GENEVA REGION

The Lake of Geneva Region, situated at the crossing of the main European lines of communication, is easily accessible by road, rail and air, thanks to the international airport at Geneva-Cointrin. Well marked roads and railway lines get the visitor easily to the hospitable shores of the Lakes of Geneva and Neuchâtel, as well as to famous holiday resorts in the Vaudois Alps.

Geneva, headquarters of some 200 international organisations, is also a very attractive city. The Bourg-de-Four Square, the oldest in Geneva, is in the very heart of the town. It is the student quarter where cafés alternate with sixteenth-century houses. The Molard flower market, the Cathedral of Saint-Pierre, the Marronnier de la Treille, and of course, the 460 ft-high jet of water in the lake, not to forget the Rousseau Island — they are all lovely sights of Geneva.

Lausanne, capital of the Canton of Vaud, is another fascinating town: The bustling area around Saint-François, the fine shopping streets such as the Rue de Bourg, Rue Caroline and other fashionable roads, the fine thirteenth-century cathedral, one of the most splendid Gothic buildings in the country, the old city with its castle, the Palais de Beaulieu with its exhibition and conference facilities, and of course, there is the port of Ouchy and its peaceful shore.

The Vaudois Riviera is overlooked by terraced vineyards. The beautiful towns of Montreux and Vevey have long been famous for their mild climate and amenities as first class

holiday resorts. The Rochers de Naye, 6,500 ft high, rise high above the waters of the Lac Léman. The view from there over the Bernese and Valaisan Alps, the mountains of Savoy and the heights of the Jura is quite exceptional.

The Lake of Geneva Region is also rich in castles, those of Morges, Coppet, Nyon, Aigle, Grandson and Lucens are particularly interesting, and the most impressive of all of them is Chillon Castle near Montreux, which was built in the thirteenth century and was one of the residences of the Princess of Savoy. Bonivard was imprisoned there in 1530, and Byron immortalised him in his famous poem "The Prisoner of Chillon".

The Vaudois Alps and their well-known resorts like Les Diablerets, Leysin, Villars and many others, are famous not only in summer, but also in winter. All kinds of winter sports can be carried out, from ski-ing to curling, riding to skating.

Not only the Alps, but also the Jura heights afford attractive holidays in summer and winter. Saint-Cergue, the Vallée de Joux and Sainte-Croix are just a few places one could mention. The Orbe Caves at Vallorbe are amongst the most beautiful in Europe; they have been tunnelled out by the River Orbe, wild and subterranean and fed by the lakes of Joux and Les Brenets.

And then there is Payerne Abbey, the church of a tenth-century Clunisian monastery, a fine Romanesque building. The Broye

region has many ruins dating back to Roman times. Avenches, the capital Aventicum of Roman Helvetia, is one of the richest archaeological sites in Switzerland, comprising an amphitheatre, a museum, part of a theatre and a surrounding wall.

One cannot say anything about the Lake of Geneva Region, nor that of the neighbouring areas, without mentioning wine and food. Immediately one thinks of *fondue*, *raclette*, fillets of perch and *beignets*. And the very sound of *Luins*, *Féchy*, *Epesses*, *Dézaley*, *Saint-Saphorin*, or, from further to the east in the Rhone Valley, the wines of *Yvorne*, *Aigle* and *Ollon*, conjure up beautiful white wines, picturesque vineyards climbing high above the towns and villages, attractive little *carnotzets*, taverns and inns dotted about the countryside. But let us not forget the red wines, including the *Pinot Noir* which was introduced from Burgundy and the *Gamay*, a *Beaujolais* variety.

All the year round, the Swiss National Tourist Office at the Swiss Centre in London is available for information on Swiss holiday, sports and recreational centres. Of course, one may have a favourite resort to which one returns again and again. But a change may be attractive, too, and now that the rate of exchange is more favourable again, one could conceivably be better off "away from it all" and get really good value for money in Switzerland. And why not try the Lake of Geneva Region, the Neuchâtel or Fribourg areas for a change? *Bon voyage!*

Mariann Meier

