

CAGI



CENTRE D'ACCUEIL DE LA GENÈVE INTERNATIONALE
INTERNATIONAL GENEVA WELCOME CENTRE

Practical information for living in Geneva

Essential Information on
Housing, Health, Education and Mobility



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Welcome

Bonjour and a warm welcome to Geneva,

Moving to a new duty station often comes with a mixture of feelings. Before arriving to your 'new home', the joy of excitement, adventure and the non-familiar as well as worry concerning local challenges can keep us busy with many unanswered questions.

The International Geneva Welcome Centre (CAGI) was established to help you answer many of these questions. As the 'one stop shop' for you as an employee of International Geneva and all your family members, we offer a wide range of services and organise many events to facilitate your settlement and integration before, and during, your stay in the Geneva region. This brochure gives you some practical and hopefully useful advice on housing, education, health and mobility. Also, see our four short films on these topics: www.cagi.ch/practical-geneva

The International Geneva Welcome Centre was founded in 1996 by the Swiss Confederation and the Republic and Canton of Geneva. Today, it is supported by over 30 public and private actors, including the two co-founders, the City of Geneva, the Canton of Vaud, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Check out our website for more about our services: www.cagi.ch – all of them are free of charge. Follow us on twitter for the latest information on our activities and services: [@CagiGeneva](https://twitter.com/CagiGeneva)

We are located in the heart of International Geneva. Don't hesitate to drop by to meet our team or contact us by phone or email.

Ambassador Salman Bal
DIRECTOR
INTERNATIONAL GENEVA WELCOME CENTRE (CAGI)

CAGI Support & Services

(all free of charge)

NEWCOMER NETWORK SERVICE

The Newcomer Network Programme for Internationals and their families, facilitates integration into Geneva and its region. For example, organising excursions to discover the local area.

Hosting lunch time conferences on education, health and other important practical issues of daily life.

The Newcomer Network Service runs the language platform and helps establish 'language tandems'.

HOUSING AND INFORMATION SERVICE

Support finding accommodation through our online housing platform and personalised VIP service for Ambassadors, Heads of International Organisations, as well as their Deputies.

Proofreading of rental contracts and tenancy law advice.

Hosting of regular lunch time conferences on housing issues.

EVENTS SERVICE & CULTURAL KIOSK AT UNOG

The Cultural Kiosk, in the heart of the Palais des Nations, offers event tickets and information on cultural and tourist activities locally and across Switzerland.

NGO SERVICE

Assistance and support to International non-governmental organisations (INGO), whether already based in, or interested in establishing an office in Geneva.

DELEGATES WELCOME SERVICE

Offering support, including potential subsidy for accommodation, to delegates attending international conferences, within the framework of International Geneva.

Housing and Accommodation

Welcome to Geneva, your new home away from home.

Whether it's for a short-term mission, or a longer-term posting, we're here to help you settle in and enjoy your time in the beautiful City of Peace.

The quality of life in Geneva is high. With Lac Léman on your doorstep and the surrounding countryside in your back garden, the city is framed majestically by the Swiss and French Alps on the horizon.

Demand for housing is strong and affordability is a consideration. Finding the right place to live, at the right price, in the right location, is always one of the biggest challenges when arriving in a new city.

Geneva is no different. You'll find a range of options, from student accommodation, rooms for rent, short-term serviced apartments, longer-term flats and family homes, right through to upmarket residences.

Property Search

First is our 'bourse du logement' service on the CAGI website.

If you're looking for a place to rent or have a housing offer, be sure to register.

It's a great place to start, as you'll receive offers matching your criteria, as well as some other exclusive offers.

www.cagi.ch
www.immobilier.ch

Online classifieds like
<https://en.comparis.ch/>
www.anibis.ch
www.glocals.com



and the '**Geneva EXPATS**' Facebook group are also popular places to search.

Housing and Accommodation

Another property search idea is to post a 'For Rent' or 'Wanted' announcement on the noticeboard at work. There might be someone leaving, just as you're arriving.

Once you've found and inspected a property that you like, you'll need to submit a detailed application with the real estate agency, also known as a 'Régie'.

BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL SCAMS.

Always view the property first, don't send any money in advance and ensure all appropriate paperwork is thoroughly checked. When in doubt, seek professional advice.

At the International Geneva Welcome Centre, we offer advice on tenancy law and proofreading of rental contracts. Don't hesitate to contact us for help.

Email: immo.cagi@etat.ge.ch

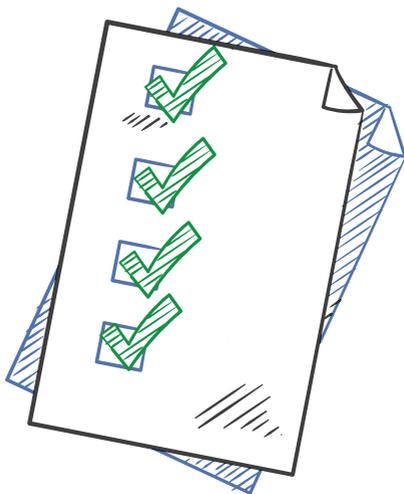


Régie's Checklist

1. The application form: stating your name and contact details, date of birth, nationality, occupation and salary.
2. A valid copy of your ID or passport, together with a copy of your official Swiss work permit or 'légitimation' card.
3. Your last 3 salary slips or a copy of your work contract, stating your income.
4. A copy of an 'attestation de non-poursuite' - which is a document showing that you are not the subject of legal debt-collection proceedings. See your local 'Offices des poursuites' website for more.

www.ge.ch/poursuites/

Ensure your application contains all required documents, or it won't be considered.





Lease Agreement Checklist

Before signing the lease agreement, make sure to check some of the following key points:

- A 'caution' or deposit not exceeding 3 months' rent will be payable by bank guarantee. This can also be covered by a no-deposit guarantee.
- Make sure an entry inspection is carried out and has your acceptance. If defects aren't noted, you might be liable for repair costs at the end of your lease.
- Be aware of termination periods. Generally, the notice period for termination is at least 3 months.
- If you need to leave before the end of the agreement, you'll have to find a suitable new tenant. You can also use our 'bourse du logement' for this.

Once you take up residence at your new address, you are required to announce your arrival at the local commune and with the 'Office cantonal de la population' (OCP) if you have a Swiss work permit; or through your employer with the Swiss Mission to the UN, if you hold a 'légitimation' card.

<https://www.ge.ch/organisation/office-cantonal-population-migrations-ocpm>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/home.html>

Be sure to notify the utilities provider, 'Services industriels de Genève' (SIG), to have the water, electricity and gas turned on and registered in your name. The same notifications need to be made when you move or leave, to avoid ongoing charges.

<https://ww2.sig-ge.ch/>

For Canton of Vaud utilities, check with the municipality.

Insurance

Private liability insurance is required in the contract. It can cover damage or injury to third parties, both as a tenant and also in public.

Household contents insurance is not mandatory, but highly recommended. Most leading insurers will offer policies and documentation in English. Cost will depend on the value of the insured items.

Broadcasting Fees (TV & Radio and other medias)

Every household is obliged to pay a radio and television fee, with the exception of diplomatic staff and senior management of international organisations. The cost is CHF 365 per year and supports public broadcasting and local media services.

More information:

www.serafe.ch

Swiss Mission for exemptions concerning diplomats and senior management of International Organisations.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/home.html> > Privileges and Immunities section



WATCH OUT OUR MOVIE

www.cagi.ch/practical-geneva

Health



Emergency Information

In the event of urgent life-threatening medical emergencies in Switzerland, dial **144** for an ambulance.

For other non-life-threatening medical emergencies, and if your usual medical practitioner is not available, you can consult one of the six public or private medical emergency centres, which belong to the Réseau Urgences Genève (R.U.G).

For more: www.urgences-ge.ch

Geneva's health and medical services are excellent and rated as among the best in Europe.

The Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) is the largest hospital in Switzerland and the Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), is also close by. As well as providing expert inpatient and outpatient care, both hospitals are leading medical research centres.

HUG Geneva: www.hug-ge.ch/en

CHUV Lausanne: www.lausanneuniversityhospital.com/home

Geneva also benefits from many specialist doctors, 'permanences médicales' and private clinics, where once again, health care is of the highest quality. Pharmacies are often conveniently located and can be a first stop for advice.

English is widely spoken in the medical sector and finding an English-speaking doctor in Geneva is not difficult.



Locate a Doctor

www.cagi.ch (under the 'Practical Geneva Health' section)

Geneva: www.geneve-cliniques.ch and www.amge.ch

Canton of Vaud: www.vaud-cliniques.ch/en/clinics/
and www.svmed.ch

Health Insurance

Everyone living and working in Switzerland must have compulsory basic health insurance. There is no family coverage, only individual coverage.

There are certain exceptions for employees of permanent missions, international organisations and their families, provided that they are insured by their employers.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/home/manual-regime-privileges-and-immunities/introduction.html>

After arriving, you have 3 months to choose an official health insurance company. In addition to the compulsory basic insurance, a variety of supplementary insurance options or 'complémentaires' is also available to meet your specific lifestyle needs.

You'll pay a monthly premium, based on an annual contract. The 'franchise' is the 'deductible' amount you pay towards your treatment costs each year. Once the deductible is reached, the insurance company will then cover the costs.

To compare health insurance company offers:

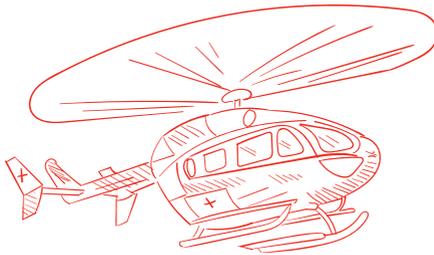
<https://en.comparis.ch/>

➔ Registration

It is a requirement to present a copy of your health insurance membership when you register your arrival with the local commune as a private citizen, or with the Swiss Mission to the UN for permanent mission and international organisation employees.

Changing health insurance providers is only possible once a year and must be done before November 30.

Accident insurance for occupational and non-occupational accidents is generally covered by your employer. Self-employed professionals need to take out their own accident insurance.



REGA

Another vital medical service is Rega – Swiss Air-Rescue. They come to the aid of people in distress, offering medical assistance by air, both in Switzerland and abroad. Rega is a non-profit foundation and offers annual membership or 'patronage' to individuals and families.

www.rega.ch



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www.cagi.ch/practical-geneva

Education

Education will be one of your top priorities if you're relocating to Geneva with children.

Often, moving to a new city involves leaving a familiar school system and a well-established circle of friends. The challenge is to find a new school that matches your child's abilities and your expectations.

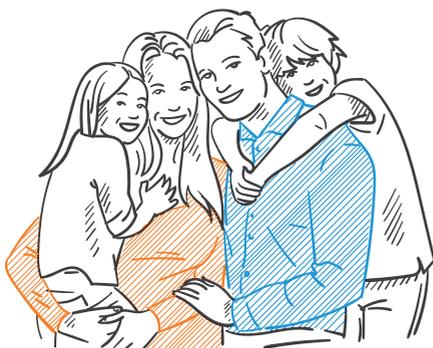
It's reassuring to know that the standard of public education in Switzerland is very high and children usually adapt well to their new school, despite initial differences in language and culture.

School is compulsory in Switzerland, starting with kindergarten at the age of 4.

For pre-schoolers, early childhood care is provided at nursery schools - or crèches. These are usually co-ordinated by your local commune. Private day care, nanny and au pair support are other childcare options, as well as Forest Kindergartens, that are growing in popularity.

You'll find more information on our website www.cagi.ch, including a link with a list of crèches, under the 'Practical Geneva Education' section.

Also, check the 'Bureau d'information petite enfance' (BIPE):
<http://www.ville-geneve.ch/plan-ville/structures-accueil-petite-enfance/bureau-information-petite-enfance/>



➔ Public Schools

Swiss public schools provide free education to all children, who legally reside in Switzerland.

In Geneva, public schools are overseen by the 'Direction générale de l'enseignement obligatoire, Département de l'instruction publique, de la formation et de la jeunesse, République et Canton de Genève':

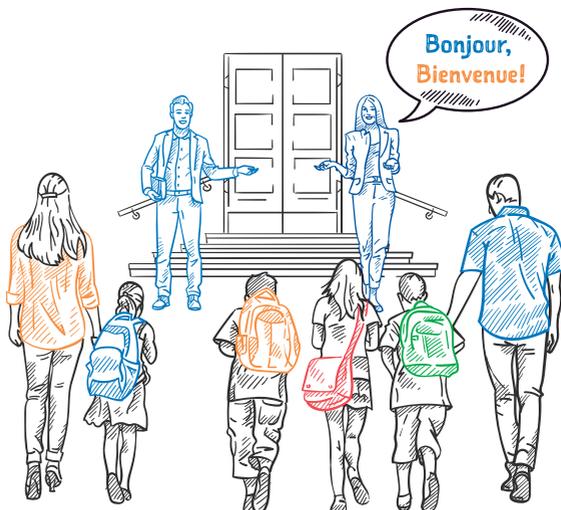
https://www.ge.ch/parcourir#ecoles_et_formations

Public school enrolments start in March, with the academic year commencing in late August. If you come from abroad, your child can join a public school at any time of the year. The child's identity card, or passport, plus residence permit will be required for enrolment.

Parents should enrol their children at a school within their local community, generally closest to their place of residence.

Primary School information 4 - 12 years:

<https://www.ge.ch/bienvenue-ecole-primaire>



For secondary school enrolments, it's best to contact the 'Direction générale de l'enseignement obligatoire' (12 - 14 years) or the 'Direction générale de l'enseignement secondaire II' (15 - 18 years) as early as possible, for placements in the next academic year starting in late August.

Secondary school information "Cycle d'Orientation" (CO):

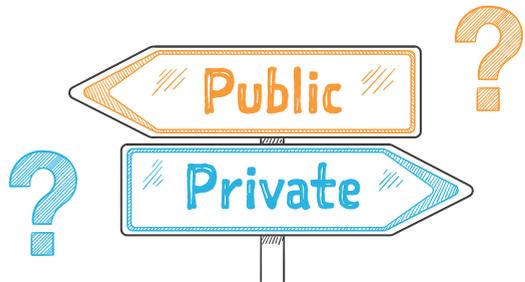
<https://www.ge.ch/inscrire-mon-enfant-au-cycle-orientation>

In the Canton of Vaud, for information about public schools (all levels), please consult the 'Direction générale de l'enseignement obligatoire' on the Etat de Vaud website. Search the 'themes' and 'formation' sections: <https://www.vd.ch>

Children from abroad will usually be required to complete a test, to determine their academic level and identify the level in which they should be placed, before they can be admitted.

Welcome classes and French language support are available to new students arriving from abroad, to help them reach a proficient level required for their learning.

Intensive immersion classes are offered during the first year, in addition to the mainstream curriculum. Grading concessions may also be considered during this introductory period, to account for the level of language proficiency.



Education

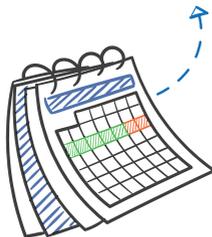
At the completion of lower-secondary school, students are streamed into post-compulsory options, based on examination results, grades and motivation.

These include:

- A.** Attending “Collège” or Gymnase, which then prepares students for the ‘Maturité gymnasiale’, necessary to access Swiss universities.
- B.** Enrolling in a ‘formation professionnelle’, to complete a vocational apprenticeship or professional certificate.
- C.** Or, continue general education for 4 years by joining what is known as an ‘école de culture générale.’

School hours are generally from 8h00 - 16h00 Monday to Friday, with a half or full day off on Wednesdays, depending on the age group. There is a 2 hour lunch break, when students may go home or join the school lunch program. Meal plans and after-school care are available in some communes for an additional cost.

8:00h - 16:00h
Monday to Friday



Private Schools

Private international schools are another popular option with expatriate families and can sometimes ease the transition of moving between countries. They offer bi-lingual and multi-lingual programs, and students can continue to learn in a familiar language, as well as maintain a consistency of recognised education programs like the International Baccalaureate (IB).

Geneva is home to the oldest international school in the world - the International School of Geneva, founded in 1924, with three campuses in Geneva and Vaud. There are many other renowned and well-reputed international schools in the local area.

In Geneva, over 17% of students are educated in private schools. The 47 private schools, which are members of the Geneva Association of Private Schools (AGEP), all hold a recognised quality certification and are recognised by the Cantonal Education Department. There are some private schools that are not members of AGEP.

Geneva Association of Private Schools: www.agep.ch

Tertiary Education

Tertiary education and post-graduate options in Switzerland are outstanding, with the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne, EPFL, the Graduate Institute and HES-SO all in close proximity. Along with private colleges and post-graduate business schools.

Special Needs

For children with additional learning requirements, All Special Kids (ASK) is a non-profit organisation in Geneva, dedicated to supporting the families of children with special needs and learning differences.

www.allspecialkids.org



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www.cagi.ch/practical-geneva

Mobility



Public transport

Swiss public transport is renowned for its 90% on-time reliability rate. In Geneva, public transport is also highly efficient and offers an extensive network.

'Transports publics genevois' (tpg) operate the buses and trams, providing 63 different services across the city, extending into neighbouring France.

A 'Tout Genève' ticket covering Zone 10 will get you across town.

Payment can be made at ticket machines, by SMS, cash, credit cards or with a contactless 'tpgPay' card.

The **Noctambus** and **Léman Express** have extended services on Friday and Saturday evenings, so you can enjoy a late night out.

LOCAL TIP

Don't forget the free 'Geneva Transport Card' when you have family and friends visiting and staying in a local hotel.

Also free, is a ticket from Geneva Airport covering Zone 10 for 80 minutes. Available from the tpg ticket machine in the Arrivals hall.

www.tpg.ch

DISCOUNT DAY PASS

Most communes offer a limited number of discounted 'cartes journalières' or day tickets. Valid for a whole day on most public transport services across Switzerland. Cost is approximately CHF 40 - 45 per day pass. Enquire at your local commune.

In the Canton of Vaud, the Mobilis network covers all major public transport providers: www.mobilis-vaud.ch

Regular passengers on Swiss public transport, may also benefit from a half-fare travel card, also known as a 'demi-tarif' - offering half-price tickets on most public transport services across Switzerland: www.cff.ch

The **unireso network** covers all modes of public transport for Geneva, including the famous 'mouettes' - the yellow shuttle boats.

www.unireso.com

The new **Léman Express** train, a joint Franco-Swiss initiative, covers a 230 km transfrontier network. Express rail connections link Coppet and Geneva in Switzerland with Bellegarde, Annecy, Evian and St Gervais in France. A Léman Pass ticket is required for travel to the French zones.

For more: www.lemanexpress.ch and www.lemanpass.com



➔ Walking and Cycling

Geneva is a charming city to navigate on foot, by kick scooter or on a bike.

Peak hour traffic is heavy, so using dedicated pedestrian paths and bike lanes is often quicker. Bicycle helmets are recommended when cycling and mandatory for e-bikes, with assistance above 25 km/h.

For more on walking and cycling in Geneva:

www.ville-geneve.ch/faire-geneve/promenades/

www.geneveroule.ch/en

www.pro-velo-geneve.ch

www.geneve-parking.ch/fr/parkings/ecomobilite/velos

www.geovelo.ch

➔ Motoring

Headlights must be turned on while driving day and night, as a legal requirement in Switzerland.

A 'vignette' or motorway sticker is required to drive on Swiss motorways. A yearly vignette costs CHF 40 and can be purchased at petrol stations, post offices and kiosks.



Swiss speed limits are 120 km/h on motorways, 80 km/h outside built-up areas and 20 - 50 km/h in built-up areas. Always check the local road signs, as driving above the limit attracts heavy fines and penalties in Switzerland.



Winter tyres are not mandatory, but highly recommended between October and Easter, as a general guide. They provide greater grip and increase braking performance on wet and slippery roads during the colder months.



If you hold a 'Carte de légitimation' as a diplomat or employee of many of the international organisations, your national driving licence is recognised in Switzerland. In all other cases, you have to change your national driving licence for a Swiss one.

For more on traffic rules, Touring Club Suisse (TCS):

www.tcs.ch



Parking



Street parking is limited in Geneva, with blue zones allowing you to park for up to one hour during the marked times. You must use a 'blue parking disc' and set it to show the next half hour, following your arrival time. For example: If you park at 14h05, set the blue disc for 14h30, which then allows you to stay until 15h30. White zones are for paid street parking and yellow zones are reserved for special purposes, like deliveries and taxis. Always check the local signs.

For more: www.geneve-parking.ch

If you wish to park at the airport, we advise checking in advance on the Airport website, for up-to-date parking availability numbers:

www.gva.ch/en/

EMERGENCY NUMBERS WHEN ON THE ROAD

117 (police)

144 (medical emergency)

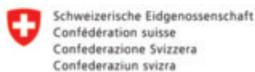


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www.cagi.ch/practical-geneva

Our members thank you for your support to CAGI

Founding members



Associate members



Sympathiser members



www.cagi.ch

Centre d'Accueil de la Genève Internationale

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Health Insurance

- <https://www.eda.admin.ch/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/home/manual-regime-privileges-and-immunities/introduction.html>
- health insurance company offers: <https://en.comparis.ch/>

⇒ **EDUCATION**

- 'Bureau d'information petite enfance' (BIPE): <http://www.ville-geneve.ch/plan-ville/structures-accueil-petite-enfance/bureau-information-petite-enfance/>

Public Schools

- https://www.ge.ch/parcourir#ecoles_et_formations
- Primary School information 4 - 12 years: <https://www.ge.ch/bienvenue-ecole-primaire>
- Secondary school information "Cycle d'Orientation" (CO): <https://www.ge.ch/inscrire-mon-enfant-au-cycle-orientation>

Private Schools

- Geneva Association of Private Schools: www.agep.ch

Special Needs

- www.allspecialkids.org

⇒ **MOBILITY**

Public transport

- Transports publics genevois (tpg): www.tpg.ch
- Unireso network: www.unireso.com
- Léman Express: www.lemanexpress.ch
www.lemanpass.com
- Transports publics Vaud: www.mobilis-vaud.ch
- Swiss train: www.cff.ch

Walking and Cycling

- www.ville-geneve.ch/faire-geneve/promenades/
- www.geneveroule.ch/en
- www.pro-velo-geneve.ch
- www.geneve-parking.ch/fr/parkings/ecomobilite/velos
- www.geovelo.ch

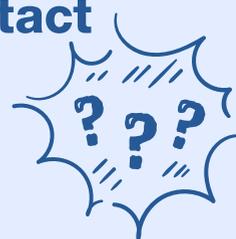
Motoring

- Traffic rules: www.tcs.ch

Parking

- www.geneve-parking.ch
- www.gva.ch/en/ (airport)

Essential contact details



⇒ **EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

- 117 (police)
- 144 (medical emergency)
- 145 (poisoning emergency)

⇒ **HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION**

Property Search

- www.cagi.ch
- <https://en.comparis.ch/>
- www.anibis.ch
- www.glocals.com
- Facebook group: Geneva EXPATS

Lease Agreement Checklist

- Arrival registration: <https://www.ge.ch/organisation/office-cantonal-population-migrations-ocpm>
<https://www.eda.admin.ch/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/home.html>
- Water, electricity and gas registration: <https://ww2.sig-ge.ch/>

Broadcasting Fees

- www.serafe.ch
- Swiss Mission for exemptions for diplomats and senior management of International Organisations: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/home.html>

⇒ **HEALTH**

Emergency Information

- www.urgences-ge.ch
- HUG Geneva: www.hug-ge.ch/en
- CHUV Lausanne: www.lausanneuniversityhospital.com
- REGA: www.rega.ch

Locate a Doctor

- www.cagi.ch ('Practical information in Geneva' section)
- Geneva: www.geneve-cliniques.ch and www.amge.ch
- Vaud: www.vaud-cliniques.ch/en/clinics/
www.svmed.ch

CAGI



CENTRE D'ACCUEIL DE LA GENÈVE INTERNATIONALE
INTERNATIONAL GENEVA WELCOME CENTRE

www.cagi.ch

welcome.cagi@etat.ge.ch



@CagiGeneva



Your One-Stop Shop for Living in Geneva

La Pastorale
106, Route de Ferney
1202 Genève
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F +41 22 546 14 19

OPENING HOURS

Monday to Friday
from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.
appointment recommended:
between 12 noon to 2 p.m.

