

# Old Town, Geneva – Like a Local

by Lizzie Davey | Published May 3, 2016

*From the outside, Geneva is covered with a pristine veneer made up of expensive watch shops and flashy cars. Dig a little deeper, though, and you'll discover a city with substance.*



The hustle and bustle of Geneva's Old Town (Photo: Ash Chuan via Flickr)

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Old Town, a part of the city that remains authentic to Geneva's roots.

Yes, you'll find chocolate shops and watchmakers here, but you'll also discover stylish cocktail bars, traditional restaurants, and artisan shops.

## Restaurants

Geneva's dining scene is growing by the day, serving up everything from local favourites to international Michelin-starred dishes.

Set in the busy heart of the Old Town, [Chez Ma Cousine](#) (Place du Bourg-de-Four 6) offers a fast food sampling of Swiss food. The cheery interior supplies a dose of happiness with every dish, while the laidback atmosphere makes it the perfect place to hang out with

friends. Simple, home cooking is the name of the game, with the most popular dish made up of grilled chicken and crispy, sautéed potatoes.

When summer rolls around, you're going to want to grab one of the few outside tables at 22 Grand Rue (Grand-Rue 22). This restaurant-cafe combo plays modern music and serves a small menu of traditional Swiss dishes with a twist (think tasty tartare with a hint of mint).

For a trendy encounter, head to the elegant Arthurs Rivegauche (Rue du Rhône 7), a hotspot known for its stylish décor, lengthy list of wines, and its refined menu of local dishes. The DJs and the picturesque terrace add a touch of glamour to the dining experience.



The interior of La Favola (Photo: La Favola)

Dubbed the best Italian restaurant in Geneva, La Favola (Rue Jean-Calvin 15) knows its tortellini from its tagliatelle. Spread out in a series of intimate dining rooms, the menu is bursting with sumptuous pasta dishes and a mouth-watering wine selection. Its location at the foot of the Cathedrale St. Pierre adds to the experience.

Michelin-starred La Bottega (Rue de la Corraterie 21) serves up a foodie extravaganza in its trattoria-style set up at the heart of the Old Town. Chefs Paulo Airaud and Francesco Gasbarro make use of organic, fresh ingredients to whip up stylish takes on traditional pasta dishes set against a minimalist backdrop.

### **Bars and Nightlife**

As darkness falls, the Old Town shows visitors a different side. Packed cosy pubs draw in locals, while upmarket cocktail menus lure in passers-by.

Settle in for the night at Demi-Lune (Rue Etienne-Dumont 3), a charming little people-watching spot in the centre of all the action. Cocktails and wine are the go-to beverages in this earth-toned hotspot, but you can also grab a couple of tapas dishes to nibble on if you get hungry.

Le Roi Ubu (Grand-Rue 30) takes the title as the oldest pub in Geneva. Its ever-busy interior is filled with beer-guzzling locals and tourists in search of the Old Town's authentic heart. With around 20 different beers on offer and a closing time of gone 2am, it is the perfect place to kick back and relax to the distinctive 70s soundtrack.

Tucked away in a 5th century square, La Clemence (Place du Bourg-de-Four 20) oozes an olde-worlde allure. It is a popular haunt for students and businessmen, but its terrace is the ideal place to sip a cold beer and watch the world go by.



*The sun shining outside La Clemence (Photo: Kai Hendry via Flickr)*

Bottle Brothers (Rue Henri-Blanvalet 12), the little brother of Grand Bottle (located just over the road), boasts a menu laden with signature cocktail dishes. The vibrant atmosphere will have anyone and everyone on their feet in no time, while the friendly staff are willing to whip up a unique alcoholic concoction if you ask.

## Cafes

The Old Town is awash with charming cafes where you can grab a bite, a coffee, and watch the day unfold around you.

Bagel House (Rue du Marché 3) will propel you to the heart of New York, where fresh ingredients are pursed together inside plush bagels. The creative vibe attracts a young crowd and the menu is bound to raise some eyebrows – muesli-flavoured bagels, anyone? While bagels are the main attraction, you can also grab a coffee and a pastry to go.

Coffee is without question the star of the show at Boreal (Rue du Stand 60), a café that gives a fervent nod towards the minimalist style of Nordic culture. Here, you can taste all sorts of coffee that spans the globe and, on a Sunday, book in for a tasting workshop.

Imbued with a lengthy history that almost holds a mythical status in Geneva, Café Papon (Rue Henri-Fazy 1) brings the past into the present with its dynamic menu made up of Swiss dishes with a certain flair. Fresh, local produce is used to create seasonal meals, while the outdoor, leafy terrace makes for the perfect resting spot.

## Galleries

Though the Quartier des Bains is Geneva's renowned arty hotspot, there are a selection of creative addresses in the cobbled streets of the Old Town, too.



Inside the M.A.D. Gallery in Geneva (Photo: M.A.D. Gallery)

The M.A.D. Gallery (Rue Verdaine 11) brings extraordinary artists together from all over the world. Showcasing unique pieces from artists that are determined to break boundaries and delve into the unknown, it is an innovative addition to Geneva's art scene.

Specialising in European and Russian masters of modern art, Artveras (Rue Etienne-Dumont 1) has been presenting fascinating shows since its opening in 2007. As well as bringing a collection of prominent artists to the masses, it also highlights a selection of emerging contemporary artists.



The warm interior of Artvera's (Photo: Artvera's)

## Shopping

Shopping is a top activity in Geneva – evident in the numerous flashy watch shops. When it comes to the Old Town, eclectic stores and price-friendly boutiques are the stars of the show.



The plush interior of Jill Wolf Jewels (Photo: Jill Wolf Jewels)

Slathered in red velvet and offering an upmarket, bespoke service, Jill Wolf Jewels (Grand-Rue 39) might fool you into thinking it is only for Geneva's elite. In actual fact, there is

something for everyone in this jewellery store that sells everything from precious stones to statement necklaces and designer one-offs.

If you're after edgy and eclectic, La Muse Boutique (Rue du Vieux-Collège 7) is the shop for you. The creative mix of labels on display come from all over the world, including big names like Vivienne Westwood and lesser, local talent. Everything you could ever want is here, from dressy heels to casual flats, sophisticated bags, and celebrity favourites.



Stylish rails of designer goods inside Septieme Etage (Photo: Septieme Etage)

Opened back in 2000 by fashion editor Katharina Sand, Septieme Etage (Rue du Perron 10) is a library of designer goods. Mixing and matching European favourites and up-and-coming