

DEMOGRAPHIA



GENEVA: WORLD CLASS CITY, TRAFFIC & GRAFFITI

FAST FACTS		Similar To
Urbanized Area* Population	399,000	Kitchener, Strasbourg
Urbanized Land Area: Square Miles	45	Regina, Rosario, Chongqing
Urbanized Land Area: Square Kilometers	120	
Population per Square Mile	8,900	Paris, Birmingham, Stockholm, Sendai
Population per Square Kilometer	3.400	
*Continuously built up area		

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Geneva is one of the world's smallest "world class cities." It is well known as a city of international organizations and was home of the League of Nations from 1919 to its demise in 1939. The name of US President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921), the father of the League who could not convince the US Congress to join will be found on a major street, a hotel and more.

Geneva has the traffic to go with world class. With a population of barely 400,000, Geneva has traffic as intense as Los Angeles, without the Los Angeles roadway system that would handle it better. Things are made worse by the obligatory local European strategies to make it harder for people to drive cars --- four lane streets made into two by the dedication of lanes to buses, trams and bicycles. There is, of course, no reason to believe that this has changed anyone's travel behavior, but it sure does make the anti-car zealots happy. Similar strategies in the United States or Canada would be the death knell of the city. But in Europe enough of the old cities remain vibrant to limit the damage to reduced competitiveness and a slower decline that would be the case in north America.

But make no mistake about it, a decline is occurring. Virtually all growth is in the suburbs and it appears clear that this is both residential and commercial. All around the Geneva area will be found newer houses on the periphery and in the villages separated by farmland from the city. In the suburbs, officials seem less inclined to deny road space to cars, so transportation works better there.

Geneva, like Berne and Zurich has a central scar much wider than any US urban freeway. At its widest point, the rail yards near the rail station are nearly one-quarter of a mile wide. This is three times the width of the Dan Ryan Expressway's 16 lane right of way in Chicago and nearly double the 16-lane right of way consumed by the MacDonald-Cartier Freeway in Toronto. There may be a wider freeway right of way in the world, but I haven't found it.

Geneva's physical site is among the most picturesque in the world. Located at the western end of Lac Lemman (Lake Geneva), the core of the city is on the east/south shore and extends around the

end of the lake to the west/north shore. On both sides of the lake there is a narrow strip of flat land, from which gentle hills. The Rhone River exits the lake at this point and is, like the two lakeshores, lined with classically styled buildings of the 19th century and crossed by a number of bridges. The Rhone itself begins in the Swiss Alps, in the Simplon Pass area to the east of Brig, and near the famous Matterhorn. It enters the Lake at the eastern end and eventually reaches the Mediterranean Sea near Marseille by way of Lyon.

There is, of course, the old League of Nations headquarters and the large complex of United Nations in this "city of peace." These facilities are located well outside the center of the city, so that workers who value their time and have a choice commute by car because of the circuitous public transport routing through the core of the city.

Geneva may be home the world's only genuine international airport. The airport itself is in Switzerland and France. It can be accessed from either country, without going through border controls.

The core itself is rather small, not much more than one square mile. To the north and west are commercial buildings outside the central business district and residential areas. Some of the inner residential areas have large houses on large lots somewhat reminiscent of the estates that can be found along Lake Michigan on the north sides of Chicago or Milwaukee. There are also more modest suburban houses, even inside the city itself. To the south and east is similar development, with some of the newer suburban housing on the extreme eastern edge, near the French border. There are also many multiple unit residential buildings. But it is clear that this is a prosperous area and that it has been so for some time.

Then there is the graffiti --- more than you will find in North American urban areas. Generally graffiti is to be found on common property --- public housing estates, or in the case of the picture below, on an electric power installation in front of a private house not defaced. Graffiti is like money. To paraphrase Milton Friedman, people are more caring of their own property than other people's property.





PICTURES

Core
Traffic in the Core
Jura Alps from South Shore
South Shore Suburbs

City: Car Wash
City: House
Low Income Housing with Graffiti
River Arve

Suburban House & Nearby Graffiti
South Suburban House
Railroad Scar
Triumph of Ideology over Function
(Traffic Allocation on Bridge)

By Wendell Cox

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