

## General

Geneva is a lovely city just north of the Swiss alps and bordering France. The city itself is hugely international but doesn't feel like a large city like Birmingham or London, so it is very pleasant to be in. You are surrounded by nature and mountains in all directions, so it is really easy to get outside for a break from work or revision. The best part about living in Switzerland is how connected the country is for travel. There are trains all around the country to some of the most beautiful places in the world.

## Transport

In Geneva I recommend getting the public transport card, this costs about £370 for the entire year, it allows access to any train, bus, tram, ferry boat within the

canton of Genève, (the equivalent to a UK county). The city itself is extremely well connected, and the trams are normally on time, there are also direct trains from the airport to the city centre which are free with your transport card. I know lots of students use bikes to travel around, there are various places you can rent or buy a bike for a year at second hand sales, but as Geneva gets lots of rains and storms at times, having access to the public transport system is helpful, else it costs 3 Fr/ hour on public transport without the card.

## Travel

There are a few options for travelling round the rest of the country, first is the half fare travel card which costs around £110, this entitles you to 50% off all trains round the country, plus some gondolas and boats, it

is a really good deal if you want to travel lots. The other option, which is what I chose most, is that young people in a group can travel cheaply, you can buy a 'friends pass' for people under the age of 25, which entitles up to 4 people to travel on any train the whole day for only £70, meaning for 4 of you that's < £18 for an entire day unlimited travel. We took advantage of this a lot, having early mornings and late evenings on many weekends.

Another great way to see the country is to join ESN, this is a society for international students, which offer very cheap and affordable trips and activities throughout both semesters, you can find them on instagram @esngeneva to see what sort of things they do and how much it costs. I partook in a lot of these events and made most of my friends through this group, so it was really easy!

# Bureaucracy

The most stressful part of my year abroad was the the Bureaucracy. As soon as you arrive you have a couple weeks to fill out all the residence permit forms, but the university do provide you with a little help but aren't very clear, so I recommend joining ESN as soon as possible and finding other friends with the same citizenship as you. The problem I had was that no one knew how to help the British students at first because of brexit but we all managed to figure it out in the end. You also have to make an account to declare taxes which I never thought I had to do, which was extremely convoluted and complicated and didn't get done till about 2 weeks before we all left. Do not worry if your permit is taking a while to come through, you can still study and live in

switzerland for 3 months and they really don't mind and are quite forgiving (mainly because it's the government being slow not you) just make sure you fill out everything on time. I had to pay around £100 for residence permit and personal taxes. You also are given a 3600 Fr scholarship to help with the cost of living in Geneva, that every European student is entitled to (yes that includes us brits!), just make sure you fill out this form correctly and you have to open a swiss bank account to receive the money. You also don't need to buy health insurance as a uk/eu citizen so don't fork out on that! Just send an email to the appropriate office saying you have a GHIC.

## Accommodation

The accommodation in Geneva shocked me, it was incredibly affordable for students

and of such great quality (as long as you don't go for cité universitaire, whom are a separate entity aside from the university, with more expensive and bad quality rooms, however there is a huge international students population in these dorms. So if price and quality doesn't matter as much to you then it's a very easy way to make friends, but definitely not needed, especially with ESN.) My accomodation cost me £395 a month including bills, and I only had to pay for the 10 months I was there. The accomdoation was a 4 bedroom flat, with HUGE bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a big kitchen, and a balcony looking at the mountains. This accomodation is ran by BLOG, the official university accommodation, and they have multiple buildings through the city. I lived in Chemin Vert, which was about a 20 minute journey to the city centre, but was quiet and right next to the nature and local mountain, so was perfect for me. It was

definitely the cheapest and nicest accomodaiton BLOG offer, I believe that's because it wasn't as central, but with the easy public transport that isn't an issue.

## Academics

First of, Warwick has way more options than Geneva, so if you're coming to try new things or if you want a specialised area this won't be good. When you look online at the module options, they show every module that was ever taken at the University in any year, so actually only a fraction of those options will be available. There ended up being only 3/4 english speaking modules in my year. And there weren't many algebra/number theory modules to take. If you plan on making this year count then you **MUST** speak French to do well enough, luckily I chose an intercollated year so I could take some

maths modules in french and English and it didn't matter. I didn't speak French before I left, and it definitely isn't needed to live in Geneva or do a year abroad there, you can take French modules to learn some French which is what I did.

In terms of actual teaching, I definitely prefer the warwick style. The maths department in Geneva is very small, and classes are only between 5-25 people. It's 1 2 hour lecture a week, often immediately followed by a 2 hour exercise class, which equated to 4 hours straight of one subject, this was a bit intense for me and I got tired of it very quickly.

The exams were very different to Warwick aswell, most of the modules have oral examinations, where you have to solve a question and present it orally to the professor, and then they will ask you questions about the course after. They



also have written exams for most subjects also, just like any other written exam.

## Overall

If you are going on your gap year to broaden your mathematical knowledge over your personal experience then this probably isn't the right university for you. If however you want to make incredible international friends, explore an amazing country and just have a lot of fun, then this is perfect. With the cheap accomodaiton, and the scholarship the university give you, don't let money put you off this wonderful opportunity, it cost me less then any year did at Warwick!

