



swiss association of real estate agents

Geneva real estate agencies.
By your side, all the way.

Looking for accommodation?

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As you know, the housing market is very tight at the moment, both in Geneva and the region as a whole. The reasons for this shortage are varied and complex: restrictive housing policy, zoning regulations, stringent laws, strong demand, etc. Unfortunately, we do not expect things to improve in the near future. You need a lot of patience and perseverance if you are looking for an apartment.

USPI Geneva (Swiss association of real estate agents Geneva) is concerned about this situation and supports any measure which may allow the construction of new apartments. In addition, it has prepared this brochure to give you some useful pointers on how to find that elusive apartment. Good luck!

What is the real estate agent's role ?

In a canton in which almost 85% of the population are tenants, the real estate agent plays a very special role. He acts as a representative of the owner, but his services also benefit the tenant directly. A real estate agent needs professionalism, technical knowledge and a good grasp of the law and accountancy – not to mention a certain flair for human relations.

Like you, real estate agents are suffering from the current crisis, even though they are in no way responsible for it. Their employees find themselves in difficult situations every day, forced as they are to disappoint too many people in their negative reply to an application.

Where do I look for accommodation ?

- In the newspapers : see the ads in Tout l'immobilier (published on Mondays), Tribune de Genève (daily + Tribune Immo on Tuesdays + Léman express supplement on Mondays), GHI...
- On the Internet: regular updates of property for sale and rent www.geneveimmobilier.ch (around thirty real estate agencies partners), and www.toutimmo.ch
- On www.uspi-ge.ch (USPI Geneva), you may access to the websites of the members. You may also access via this website to a facility which transfers automatically your requests to the real estate agencies linked to this facility. They will answer you directly.

- For subsidised housing: Office cantonal du logement www.geneve.ch/logement/welcome.asp.

- For international personnel: Welcome Centre - Geneva International www.cagi.ch as well as Geneva Expat Information www.geinfo.ch.

Expand your search, consider all offers, do not limit yourself to one area or neighbourhood: this increases your chances of finding an apartment.

Should I place my own ad ?

Unless you are looking for something out of the ordinary or extremely rare, it is pointless publishing an ad under "Apartments wanted". The chances are that it will not be read.

I am interested in an apartment

Call the number shown in the ad straight away. Register with the agency personally, taking all the necessary documents with you. This approach gives you your first contact with the agency. Pay a quick visit to the apartment that interests you so that you can confirm your registration.

You have found an ad that looks interesting but the apartment has already been taken? That can happen, since newspaper distribution's schedules vary. It is better to search for an apartment on the Internet.

Do I have to pay off the existing tenant ?

The current tenant may ask you for a "pay-off", for example for improvements made to the apartment. This kind of arrangement would be strictly between you and the tenant, and would not bind the owner in any way. As the owner is the only one entitled to choose the future tenant, we strongly advise you not to pay any money to the present occupant.

Registering with a real estate agency

Every day, real estate agencies are swamped with registrations – 80 and more for a given apartment! This means that you cannot just make one general registration – you have to repeat the registration procedure for each apartment that interests you.



In order to speed up the processing of your application, you should bring with you :

- an identity card (foreigners also need their residence or work permit);
- your last three payslips;
- a recent certificate from the Office des poursuites (the office responsible for debt proceedings and bankruptcies);
- references may be required.

These documents will enable the real estate agency, which is financially liable towards the owner, to confirm your good credit record.

Do I need to supply other information ?

The documents required for registration are sufficient. Save time by updating your application details regularly, and have several copies readily available.

My application is accepted

This being the case, you will receive a reply very quickly and the agency will draw up a lease contract for you to sign. This standard form contains the general conditions, and the rules and regulations governing property rentals in the canton of Geneva. You may be required to deposit a guarantee not exceeding three months' rent. This sum has to be placed in general in a blocked bank account within 30 days of signing the contract, but at the latest when you move into the apartment. You will also have to take out personal liability insurance as well as an insurance for your own belongings as a guarantee in the event of damage to the apartment. If you back out of the apartment deal before signing the contract which has been drawn up for you, the agency is entitled to demand reimbursement of its administrative expenses.

My application is refused

Because of the many registrations received for every apartment offered for rent, real estate agencies cannot reply to everyone whose application has been rejected. Please do not hold this against them! Some agencies do not keep your application details on file. Should you be interested in another apartment later on, you may be asked to register again with them.

Who chooses the tenant ?

As a general rule, the owner takes the final decision ; the agency acts as an intermediary. There are various criteria governing the choice of tenant, based on objective factors and principles of good faith and trust, namely :

- your solvency ;
- the impression you make on the agency ;
- competition with other candidates ;
- your personal situation (a family with children stands more chances of being chosen for an apartment with several bedrooms).

Someone offers me a sublease

Subleasing is allowed, but it is subject to certain conditions. A tenant who wants to sublet all or part of his apartment must obtain the written consent from the real estate agency, stating the terms and conditions of the sublease. We draw your attention to the fact that subletting exposes the principal tenant to certain risks. He will remain responsible for the payment of the rent towards the owner even in the case that the subtenant does not pay his rent. He is also responsible towards the owner for any damages and depredation caused by the subtenant. In addition, by subleasing his apartment, the tenant becomes a landlord and shall therefore assume all the obligations related with this status.

USPI Geneva hopes that this brochure will be helpful to you and we wish you every success.

Founded in 1879, the Société des Régisseurs was the first real estate professionals' association in Switzerland, and maybe even in Europe. With only ten members at its foundation, it counts today around 40 members operating in real estate management, brokerage, construction, valuation and advise.

Since April 1st, 2009, the association has adopted the name Swiss association of real estate agents Geneva (USPI Geneva), taking up the name of the Swiss real estate professionals holding association, USPI Switzerland. It contributes thereby to the harmonisation efforts undertaken by the cantonal associations.

The members of USPI Geneva manage approximately 70% of all rental property in Geneva, both housing and commercial properties. By its importance and its representativeness, USPI Geneva is a major actor in Geneva for all questions related to real estate, and in particular to housing.

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