

## Foreigners in Geneva under the Restoration

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP  
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),  
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

The Restoration made Geneva and its surroundings a favoured destination for foreign travellers. The English, in particular, discovered Lake Geneva and the Alps in the wake of Romanticism. The stay of Lord Byron and the Shelleys on the shores of the lake in 1816 has remained famous, not least because it was there that Mary Shelley conceived the novel *Frankenstein*.<sup>1</sup> Other travellers, writers, aristocrats and persons of independent means followed in their footsteps.

The presence of these foreigners stimulated the hotel trade, the luxury trade and services. Grand hotels were built on the lakeshore from the 1830s onwards.<sup>2</sup> Foreign communities, English, Russian and German, established themselves in the city, with their churches and their institutions. This openness prepared the cosmopolitan vocation of Geneva, which James Fazy would encourage after 1846.

For the bankers, these foreigners represented a new clientele. They needed foreign exchange services, transfers of funds, letters of credit for their travels and sometimes the management of their assets. Some entrusted part of their fortune to Genevan bankers on a lasting basis. Wealth management for a foreign clientele, which would become the principal activity of the financial centre in the twentieth century, finds here one of its points of departure.

### 1 Notes

1. Commune de Cologny, “Villa Diodati” (cologny.ch): the villa, built in 1710, housed Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, Percy Shelley, John Polidori and their friends during the summer of 1816; it was there that the foundations of *Frankenstein* and *The Vampyre* were laid; the villa is listed as a Swiss cultural property of national significance. ↩

## *Foreigners in Geneva under the Restoration*

2. Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse (DHS), art. “Constructions hôtelières”: among the first grand hotels in Switzerland, “the Bergues in Geneva in 1830–1834”, followed by the Trois Rois in Basel (1842) and the Baur au Lac in Zurich (1844); the improvement of roads, the network of postal coaches and the entry into service of the first steamboats supported the growth of tourism. ↩

---

*For general information only. This article does not constitute legal or tax advice, does not replace advice on an individual case and creates no lawyer-client relationship. It reflects the legal position as of September 2026.*

Online version: [helveticaregister.com/geneva-foreigners-in-geneva-under-the-restoration](https://helveticaregister.com/geneva-foreigners-in-geneva-under-the-restoration)