

The Geneva Gazette - Issue 1

Bonjour à tous au ACP!

Most of my activities have been paperwork, orientation, and housing related, but I managed three stories for this debut issue.

- Left Behind: Touring CMS
- On the Bus
- The Territorial Genevois

Left Behind: Touring CMS



Katie Yurkewicz, three years ago, but she looks about the same. Longer hair.



Would you trust this man to remember you?

Katie Yurkewicz, the woman who I will replace when she goes on maternity leave, arranged with James Gillies of the press office for me to accompany him and journalist Alison on a tour of LHC facilities. I was to meet him at the Microcosme reception at 10 am. Arriving just on time, I looked around the room and wondered how I would find him. The room wasn't particularly big, but I realized that I wasn't sure what he looked like. I had met him briefly, the day I arrived, and I couldn't put together a clear image from that groggy, jet-lagged memory.

After watching the room for fifteen minutes, hoping to see a man who looked familiar, or a woman and a man who appeared to be meeting, I gave up and

asked the receptionist if she'd seen James Gillies around. Alas, he had left before I arrived. In fact, he'd forgotten me.

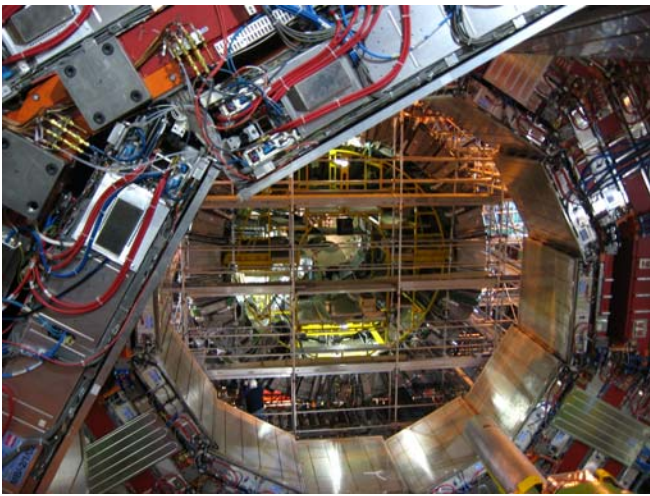
Luckily, the scientist who was giving the tour of CMS (Compact Muon Solenoid) was running late, so he gave me a ride in his very nice car. Jim Virdee likes to drive his burgundy Jaguar fast, so we passed a lot of slower vehicles and made fifteen minutes of what is usually a twenty minute drive from Microcosme to CMS. Alison, who was writing for *The Economist*, believes that it would be worth being forgotten if she had a chance to "ride in that *Jag-yu-ar*."



Jim Virdee, CMS spokesperson and French backroad speed-racer. Background: CMS detector slice, muon detectors mostly.

Don't get the wrong idea from "compact." The detector is still five stories high and 12,000 metric tons. It's mainly looking for

new particles like the Higgs boson. When asked if why he thought the CMS had an edge on ATLAS, Virdee's immediate response was simply, "It's a better detector."



A slice of the CMS detector, another slice in foreground, scaffolding in background.

On the Bus

My first Saturday, I lined up three room visits in Geneva and Meyrin (suburb near CERN). It was my first time using the busses, but I had lined up all my itineraries on line and knew when the busses I needed would arrive at what stops. Armed with my Google maps and notes, I bought an "All-Geneva 24 hours" ticket. It came out of the machine looking a lot like a receipt, and upon boarding the bus, didn't see a place to pay or swipe a card. The bus driver looked unimpressed as I flashed my receipt and sat down.



On the next bus, I tried flashing the receipt to board again, but the driver shook his head. Dang, I had the wrong kind of ticket. I turned to go, and he said something in French that was too fast for me to understand, but he gestured at the seats, and I understood that I could ride. I offered the receipt again, and he laughed. "Je ne suis pas contrôleur," he said.

That, I understood. The contrôleur checks the tickets and fines people who don't have them on trains. Busses move more quickly when people aren't held up paying when they get on. It also means that you don't necessarily have to pay unless you get caught, which is more sporting than the US systems, but given the expensive fines, I'll not be taking my chances.

The Territorial Genevois

While it was easy enough to find roommates willing to share space in East Lansing and around College Park, the folks in Geneva are less hospitable to tenants renting a room. The first room I saw was in an apartment where a family lives. I would have a room, share a bathroom, and use a kitchenette. I would be restricted to that floor of the apartment and would not be allowed into the larger living space or balcony unless no one else was there.

The other room was in the house of an older couple, again sharing a bathroom with another tenant. Rather than a kitchenette, there was a dorm-sized fridge and a water-boiling pot. I would not have access to the actual kitchen, and I would not be allowed to play music except through headphones.

Although renting from people who aren't students or young alumni may be similar in the US, this was sort of shocking to me.

Now, I have a room in an apartment for a month and a half with a man named Mustapha. He grew up in France, but his family comes from Algeria, so the décor is a bit Middle Eastern. He's cool, so I don't have to be silent or stay in a tiny corner of the apartment. Actually, my bed folds down from a wall in the living room.



The living room of the apartment. Note the cool drapery. And my suitcase in the corner...

Fun (or not-so-fun) Cultural Differences

- Almost all stores in Geneva are closed on Sunday, and most close at six on weekdays, which makes it hard to shop on any day but Saturday.
- The dinner crowd at restaurants doesn't really hit its peak until eight or eight-thirty, and it's completely dead before seven.
- Dan Brown wrote the director of CERN in a wheelchair for *Angels and Demons*, but a disabled person would have a hard time getting around the main site – cut curbs are uncommon.