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**BETTER READ
LITERARY TOURS**

Paris - France
October 16-31 2019

Writing Retreat & Literary Tour

MEMOIR WRITING

with
PATTI MILLER

**ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION**

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A WRITING COURSE

This writing sojourn is centred on a series of nine half-day classes with Australia's leading teacher of memoir, Patti Miller. The first class on Sunday is two hours and then classes run from 10am to 1pm, the equivalent of a 13 week semester course.

This course offers a deep immersion in the ideas, techniques and practice of writing memoir and has been designed to extend and enrich all levels of experience. Each day will follow a rhythmic pattern with classes in the morning, including a coffee break with treats from the local boulangerie.

In class we will cover such topics as Beginning Again, Original Memory, Texture and Detail, the Narrator, Narrative Structure, the Difficulties of Truth Telling, Organising Your Material, Structural Trouble-Shooting, the Borderlands with Fiction, Travel Memoir, and many other writing issues. You will write and workshop (that is, share your writing with the class) in a creative, supportive and encouraging environment.

The course is shaped around Patti's new writing text, *Writing True Stories*, and a booklet of extra readings provided before you depart for Paris.

Also included is a one-hour individual writing consultation with your writing guide, Patti Miller. During this time you can discuss your personal writing concerns in-depth without interruption. This is an invaluable opportunity to sort through and solve those writing blocks – and all in the unique ambience of a Paris café.

The afternoons are free for your own writing and for exploring the delights of Paris. You will have the support of our delightful Tour coordinator, Maisie, to help with any of your plans.

Why Paris?

Writing Memoir in Paris – it is Autumn, the season of memories, of reflection on life, of 'mellow fruitfulness'.

Here is the city of writers; Balzac, Flaubert, Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, George Sand, de Beauvoir.

Here, indeed, is the birthplace of modern memoir itself, the country where Montaigne wrote his Essays about the nature of Self and where the philosopher Rousseau wrote his autobiography, Confessions. Paris is the city of memory and a city that believes the individual life is worth exploring in the art of memoir.

Join us in this memoir intensive to immerse yourself in ideas, beauty and writing for 15 days in the city of light.



A literary feast

Writing is enriched by the experience of a literary culture and so this journey also offers a range of literary experiences.

- A series of nine half day workshops with acclaimed writing skills teacher Patti Miller
- A carefully selected and thought-provoking reading list will be provided well before your departure date to inspire you in exciting literary directions.
- A brief lecture on the history of Paris will give you a rich context for your sojourn.
- A lecture on French memoir will be given on the first Sunday of the course so that you will have the richness of a long tradition of memoir to draw on for your own writing. You will be introduced to Montaigne, Rousseau, de Beauvoir and many others.
- On Sunday morning, before our welcome lunch, we will dip into this rewarding territory so that each person can begin to find his /her direction for the following two weeks.
- A literary ramble from a local expert, Martine Hamel (depending on availability), will be offered so that you can walk in the footsteps of James Joyce or Balzac, explore where they lived, wrote, drank... She is a passionate source of literary knowledge. Her fee is additional.
- A literary soirée at a local writer's apartment (a great honour) or at one of the English bookshops in Paris is on the schedule as it's always a great way to



have your finger on the writing pulse. You can listen to readings and ask questions of a leading contemporary writer in the intimate atmosphere of Shakespeare's bookshop or at a specially arranged café reading...

- And, most importantly, our cafes and restaurants have been chosen for their cultural significance as well as their fine food and wine. We can drink with Hemingway's ghost or have coffee with Sartre and de Beauvoir or enjoy the company of hundreds of other memoirists, poets, novelists and playwrights who have made Paris their home over the centuries.

The Writer's Life in a Parisian studio

You will be staying in a light and well-appointed studio with a kitchenette and all facilities, including wifi, so that you can live as a writer in your own independent space. You will have the thrill of getting to know your own boulangerie as you buy your croissants and baguette for breakfast – although there is a breakfast room downstairs if you feel like being looked after (for an extra charge). You then make your way to class, either walking or taking the Metro, gathering your thoughts for a lively and engaging writing class. Join new friends after class for lunch in a local cafe, visit the Pompidou centre or Louvre or Musée d'Orsay in the afternoon, meet with fellow writers for a glass of wine at writers' haunt in the evening, then perhaps move onto to a dinner, or concert at the opera or a jazz club – but always make sure you have enough time for writing.

The studios are located together in a central 'Apartment hotel', which means that you will have both the like-minded company of your group whenever you wish and your own individual and private space. You will have double bed, desk, kitchenette, bathroom, dishwasher, hairdryer, wifi – and access to a washer and dryer, as well as a 24 hour desk service. Studios will be serviced once a week, with fresh sheets and towels available as you wish during the week. Your studio will either look out on a lively square or an inner courtyard-garden.

The studio will be your personal retreat, giving you the space and privacy to write, while still affording you easy access to company whenever you wish. A thoughtful welcome pack when you arrive will mean you can brew a cup of tea and make yourself at home in the centre of Paris from the beginning of your stay. The studios are secure and welcoming, and because everyone is in the same location, it will be easy to find your way to and fro from the writing venue or to any of our literary events.

This is a writing sojourn for independent-minded travellers rather than for people who want a guided tour. At the same time, it is for people who enjoy stimulating, like-minded company and conversation, and who share a love of writing and literature. We offer suggestions for interesting walks around Paris and how to discover what is on.

We also offer an optional tour – a trip to the fascinating town of Provins.

We will also have some group gatherings; flight recovery drinks on first arrival in a well-known theatre cafe, a champagne brunch at our venue to celebrate being writers in Paris, a welcome lunch at a belle époque restaurant, and finally, a farewell dinner at a specially chosen literary restaurant.





Morning Lessons

As told by one of our past participant.

Our workshop venue is centrally located, charming and comfortable. There are cafes nearby and it quickly becomes the habit of my fellow writers to meet at one of these venues for coffee or hot chocolate prior to the workshop starts. The workshop course is interesting and well structured. Patti Miller is a knowledgeable facilitator who keeps the 12 participants constantly challenged and focused. Any straying from the business at hand is soon reeled in and the daily writing exercises and homework provide ample opportunities for development and growth.

Classes are often filled with emotion, but there are also moments of laughter. Some pieces that are read leave the other participants gasping, in awe of such beautiful writing. By the end of the workshop, it becomes apparent that the accumulation of our daily writing exercises amounts to the core of what it is that we want to write about. And like the daily morning teas, encouragement is always generous.

Friendships formed

It doesn't take long for the bonds of friendship to infiltrate our group of 12. There is a constant pooling of suggestions about what to see and do. Sometimes, adventures are undertaken as a group; sometimes just two people venture forth, and it is always okay to be an individual and do your own thing.

Every day in Paris was a treat for me; I didn't waste one minute. But the highlights were my visit to the traditional public hamman (baths) in the Grand Mosquée de Paris with Betty; an organ recital and Vespers in Notre Dame Cathedral; a day in the non-touristy parts of Montmartre with Vicky et al; and the monks and nuns chanting in St Gervais followed by Russian buskers in the Metro – what a musical contrast! There are so many other treats that I want to mention, but I must desist!

Paris, the City of Light, is magical; the workshop was inspirational; but the memories are what dreams are made of.

Additional information

What level of writing experience is required?

This course is designed for people who have already begun their writing journey, but you are not required to have attended a writing workshop before. We do believe that a writing course with Patti before joining Writing Memoir in Paris, is the ideal preparation.

Details for life writing courses can be found on the Australian Writers' Centre website – www.WritersCentre.com.au – or Patti Miller's own website – www.lifestories.com.au

Workshopping – reading and discussing each other's writing in a supportive and creative environment is a central aspect of the course. It gives each writer the essential experience of being part of a writing community. The writing classes will be based on Patti's new book *Writing True Stories*, so it's a good idea to check this text before booking so that you know Patti's hands-on approach to writing workshops.

Should I bring a laptop?

You are welcome to bring a laptop but remember – during the course, you will not be using a desk. If you prefer to work on a laptop you are welcome to do so, but please consider if this will be the most comfortable way for you to sit during classes. We find that most people prefer to use a pen and notebook for classes, then transcribe their work to their laptop later.

Who else is likely to enrol in Life Writing in Paris?

Our experience reveals that people likely to enrol are between 25 and 70 years old, both men and women (although there are more women than men). Most have travelled before. All are enthusiastic about extending their horizons, all are interesting and interested in their surroundings and in each other, and all are passionate about literature and writing.





How I do find my way around?

We will give you exact information on how to get from the airport (or train station) to your studio. You will also be given a tutorial on 'How To Use the Metro' (underground train system) at the pre-departure rendez-vous in Sydney before we go and another 'brush-up' tutorial if required at our first meeting in Paris. If you are unable to attend the pre-departure meeting instructions will be emailed to you.

You will also be given Paris map books at the rendezvous and will be shown how to locate your own studio and how to get from your studio to the writing course venue. Your Tour Coordinator also will leave in your studio written directions to the class venue – all will give you throughout the course, written directions to all other venues. If you need a taxi for a special occasion – and you don't speak French – your Tour Coordinator can also help.

Help, I don't speak any French!

These days, so many Parisians speak some English it will not really be an issue. Patti speaks functional French and for complicated issues, your Tour Coordinator will be able to help. It is also a good idea to brush up on basic greetings and polite expressions as, contrary to popular opinion, the French appreciate politeness!

Health and fitness

You need to be healthy enough to withstand the long flight to Paris and be able to use steps in the Metro and steps to the workshop venue – Paris does not cater well for those who have mobility difficulties. You need to be independent enough to manage an easy-to-use (but at first unfamiliar) transport system, self-reliant and able to communicate with a new group of people. Memoir writing can stir powerful memories, so each person needs to decide if she/he is ready for the creative and personal journey of writing and sharing life experiences on the page.

Special food requirements

There are health food shops in all arrondissements, and there are many good Indian and Asian restaurants, but it must be admitted that cafés do not normally provide for special dietary requests very well – vegetarians will not be imaginatively catered for in most French cafés.

If you let us know your requirements, the Tour Coordinator will request alternative meals when making bookings for group meals. Dietary requirements will be taken into account when supplying the welcome packs.



What will the weather be like?

It's autumn, so variable, but in the last several years, mid October has been cool to mild with an average of 14 degrees. Some days the weather is sunny and mild, perfect for walking in the Jardin du Luxembourg; other days can be rainy and cool, ideal for a cosy afternoon in the Louvre. Think mild winter's day in Sydney – either warm enough to sit in the sun at a café, or cool enough to wear your favourite scarf. You will need a jacket and a coat in the evenings.

Safety

Normal travel precautions are advised. In terms of personal safety, Paris is similar to any large city. Be aware of your personal possessions, especially on the Metro or in markets.

Do I need to do any preparation?

You need a copy of *Writing True Stories* by Patti Miller as this will be your textbook during the course. You can buy this book at any good bookstore. Please make sure you purchase this book before you leave Australia.

You'll also receive a booklet of extra readings for the classes. These will all be given to you at the pre-departure rendezvous. You will also be sent a reading list no later than three months before departure date so that you can begin to immerse yourself in the literary culture of Paris.





Pre-departure rendezvous

Sunday August 18th 2019

2.00pm for a 2.30pm start – 4.30pm

A very important date – the official pre-departure meeting in Sydney.

The venue will be:

Better Read Than Dead
265 King St, Newtown, Sydney

We meet to get to know each other a little and ask questions and we will give you an information pack and your memoir reader. The information pack will contain details about your studio and your quartier, Paris map book, day-by-day itinerary, recommended walks, suggested cafés and other useful information. The reader will contain extra material for the writing classes. You will have the chance to meet your fellow writers and to get in the mood for Paris with a little French wine and petit-fours. Make sure this date is in your diary!



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