

Spring Writing Holiday - Villa Stari Mlin, Bay of Kotor, Montenegro

Monday 30th April – Monday 7th May 2018

Join us for a fabulous Spring Writing Holiday with bestselling author and University of East Anglia and *Guardian* writing tutor Mark McCrum. The course will be held at Villa Stari Mlin, a luxurious 400-year-old Montenegrin stone villa on the Lustica peninsula in the small village of Zabrdje, with unparalleled views over the famed Bay of Kotor and the Dinaric Alps.

Our writing course offers something for everyone, and at all levels. How do you create an engaging character or write believable dialogue? How do you sustain a plot or structure a memoir? What are the essentials of writing engaging, fluent and descriptive prose? How do you deal with writing about those you know and love without offending them?

This will be a relaxed and enjoyable week, with daily sessions on key areas of creative writing, with examples drawn from expert practitioners. Whether you are a beginner, a seasoned professional who wants to unlock their creative side, or someone who is struggling to finish a novel, memoir, or other non-fiction, this course aims to offer practical and well-tried solutions. Everything is optional, so there's no need to feel tied down.

In addition to writing and delicious food, guests will have a chance to take a boat tour of the Bay of Kotor, visiting island monasteries and Venetian Republic fortresses, and will also be given the opportunity to visit a working centuries-old family olive farm in a nearby village, learning how to taste olive oil like a professional, and trying local delicacies over lunch in the olive press cellar. There will also be the opportunity to join walks in the beautiful hills, visiting abandoned mediaeval villages and strolling along paths amongst the mediterranean flora.



from £1,350pp including:

- 7 nights' stay in this beautiful heritage property
 - Full board with dedicated chef, including:
 - Buffet breakfast*
 - Two-course lunch*
 - Three-course dinner*
 - Refreshments available throughout the day
- Transfers from and to the airport in Montenegro
 - All writing tuition

Tuition and Writing

Each day there will be two writing sessions, from 10 a.m - 12 p.m. and 4.30 - 6.30 p.m. (the exact timing of the afternoon session will be flexible depending on excursions, walks etc.) In the morning we will meet to do an exercise relating to an area of creative writing, such as character, dialogue, narrative or plot. These exercises are intended to develop writing skills in non-fiction work such as memoir as much as in fictional endeavours. In the afternoon session we may look at and discuss the work of well-known published writers, often from a practical angle, before applying lessons learned to our own work. Mark will be on hand at all times to look at individual writing problems, whether it be that tricky first chapter of a novel or memoir or a dilemma about an overarching structure.

Your writing tutor, Mark McCrum

Mark has run masterclasses in memoir for the Guardian and the University of East Anglia, and creative writing courses with Dartington Hall's Ways with Words in Devon and Italy. A seasoned professional writer, he has published sixteen books, in genres ranging from travel to crime, five of which have been top ten bestsellers. He is also an expert ghost writer, working with everyone from the pop star Robbie Williams to forced marriage campaigner Jasvinder Sanghera. Several of those who have attended his courses have gone on to produce published work. Mark has an excellent knowledge of the world of agents and publishers as well as the pros and cons of self-publishing. More information can be found on Mark's website: www.markmccrum.com



Testimonials

“I can honestly say the course was a life changing experience. Mark is an incredibly inspiring tutor; he teaches with humour, honesty and patience. His encouragement and enthusiasm for writing is infectious.”

“He’s more than a witty and knowledgeable guide; he’s a serious craftsman, an excellent teacher and a good companion.”

“Mark is an inspiring teacher. He is low key, encouraging, and knowledgeable. He combines in-class exercises with instruction, and crucially he knows where each course member is at in their writing so that he can gauge his comments accordingly.”

“Doing the memoir masterclass with Mark remains a potent and happy memory. He was an inspirational course leader with exactly the right combination of encouragement and positive criticism.”

“Mark had a remarkable ability to assess the various writing problems he set...and communicate positive criticism clearly and digestibly... Mark gave me - and probably everyone there - the confidence to write quickly and to read this out to the rest of the group, and then make his always encouraging comments...in addition to Mark’s observations about our own work, he gave us an amazing number of suggestions for further reading, all tailored to our personal needs.”

“Mark was a kindly and supportive tutor but he was always prepared to provide positive criticism and thus move the writing of the whole group forward, despite all of us having very different stories to tell and widely varying ‘voices’.”



Villa Stari Mlin

Villa Stari Mlin is a 400 year-old Montenegrin heritage property fully restored and modernised to provide all the comforts of 21st century living, while retaining all the charm of its long history. Located high up on the Lustica peninsular, the villa has dramatic, 180-degree views of the Bay of Kotor and the twin massifs of the Orjen and Lovcen mountains, and is nestled on a peaceful hillside surrounded by olive groves, small stone hamlets and fishing villages. Villa Stari Mlin is owned and managed by Jonathan Wiggin, who saved it from virtual ruin in 2014.



The main house has 5 bedrooms with ensuite, each individually decorated with a combination of English and continental antique and contemporary furniture. The large master suite has an ensuite bathroom, while the other four double rooms are each equipped with ensuite shower rooms. Two of the bedrooms can be either double or twin. There is a large sitting room with comfortable sofas and a wood burning stove, a spacious, fully modernised kitchen-dining room comfortably seating 14, and a sizeable first floor veranda for outdoor dining, with stunning views onto the rural landscape and the sea and mountains beyond. The terraced garden, which is planted with typical

Montenegro Writing Holiday

Mediterranean plants, herbs and trees, includes a 10-metre infinity pool that (weather-permitting) we very much hope guests will use, a large stone-paved sun terrace, and a shady pergola made from parts of the original wooden olive press that was in use until less than twenty years ago.



Food and Drink

Elaine Brown, a former superyacht chef, who has worked for some of the most demanding clients in the world, will be providing the food for your bridge break, offering a delicious and varied menu, which will be nutritionally balanced and using plenty of locally-sourced ingredients. For breakfast a cooked option is offered alongside a buffet of fruits, yoghurts, homemade bread, jams and cereals. Lunch is two courses with wine, and dinner is three courses with wine. Other refreshments (tea, coffee, soft and alcoholic drinks) are available during the course of the day.

Sample menus:

Crumbed prawns with Japanese tartare

Eye fillet served with sweet potato and ginger mash, and baked peppers with anchovies & red wine sauce

Chocolate fondants with a raspberry coulis

Courgette soufflés

Tuna steaks with lemon caper sauce, served with fennel fritters & rosemary potatoes

Lime tartlets with fresh kiwi



Daily Schedule

Breakfast 8.30am – 9.30am

Writing tuition 10.00am – 12.00pm (with a coffee break around 11am)

Lunch 12.30pm

Writing tuition 4.30pm - 6.30pm

Dinner 8pm



Excursions

There will be two wonderful optional excursions during the writing holiday:

Kotor and Perast (price per person €20)

We will be organising a tour of stunning UNESCO-listed walled Kotor, including a boat-trip to the beautiful Our Lady of the Rock church and island off the coast of the small Venetian Republic town of Perast, and to the stunning town of Perast itself.



Lustica olive oil tour (price per person €20)

A visit to a traditional olive press and organic olive farm on the Lustica peninsula, during which you will discover how each Montenegrin family traditionally produced their own olive oil, and also to see how modern organic olive oil production is performed. You will have a chance to learn how professional olive oil tasters taste and judge the qualities of oil, and the visit also includes a lunch with local delicacies and drinks.

Walking

Fiona will be offering a couple of walks in the beautiful rolling hills of the Lustica peninsula, and on the hill dividing the bays of Kotor and Tivat. This will be an opportunity to see unspoilt Montenegrin nature and ancient hill villages, and to take in some of the best views that Montenegro has to offer.

The walks will be free of charge, so just bring suitable sturdy shoes and a small daysack for carrying a bottle of water and a snack if you think that you might want to take part. Fiona will make sure that the walks suit the physical abilities of all those who choose to join her.



Travel Details

The closest airport is Tivat (only 20 minutes' drive from Villa Stari Mlin), with direct flights from Gatwick on Easyjet. There are also options via Dubrovnik (approximately 1½ hours' drive from the village) for those who would prefer to make their own way to the villa. Flight times from London are 2½ hours.

Suggested itinerary:

30th April, London Gatwick – Tivat, 06.45-10.40 (Easyjet)

7th May, Tivat – London Gatwick, 11.30-13.20 (Easyjet)

Approximate return ticket price £100-120 (incl. hold luggage) if bought well in advance

For those who would prefer to arrive independently, car hire is very inexpensive, roads are perfectly good, and we will be able to give you simple instructions on how to get to the house.





PRICES

PRICES (Per person)	Villa Stari Mlin	
	Double occupancy	Single occupancy
<i>Suite with ensuite bathroom</i>	£1,450	£1,650
<i>Double or twin room with ensuite shower room</i>	£1,350	£1,450

How to Book...

To make an initial reservation of your place, please simply send an email to jonathan@villastarimlin.com. Once we have a clear idea of numbers, you will be sent a booking form for you to fill out stating your room preferences. This booking form you should either scan and email to jonathan@villastarimlin.com or post to 3 Sanctuary Mews, London E8 3BD, together with the deposit of £200 per person. The full payment will be due by 26th March 2018.

Payment

Where possible an online transfer is preferable for a speedy transaction that is easy to track.

Online Transfer:

Account name: 'Mr J Wiggin' Account Number: 10375039 Sort Code: 20-97-09

Please quote 'Writing 18' as your payment reference

Cheque:

Please make cheques payable to 'Mr J Wiggin'

For more details:

email: jonathanwiggin@gmail.com

telephone: +44 7920 225 706 (UK) or +382 547645 (Montenegro)

address: Jonathan Wiggin, 3 Sanctuary Mews, London E8 3BD

Villa Stari Mlin

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