

The Moving Finger

America's creative guru Eric Maisel conducts irresistible writing workshops worldwide. We doubt you can resist!

If you're a writer, you write wherever you live. You write in Duluth, Detroit, or Dubai. But I'm positive that you also have some wanderlust in you and a powerful desire to write in places that hold extra meaning for you, places like Paris, London, and Rome. Writers have been traveling to the world's great cities for centuries, plying the international bohemian highway.

I help facilitate their travels. I'm a writer (with 40+ published books under my belt, including **A Writer's Paris** and **A Writer's San**

Francisco), a creativity coach, a therapist, and a workshop leader. I run writing workshops all over the world and spend time writing in all the usual haunts, like Parisian parks and cafés, but also in odd places that tickle my fancy: a bus station in Prague, a crypt in Rome, a Turkish wine bar in Berlin.

Sometimes I'm invited to lead a workshop and helped to find a venue. More often, I organize the workshop myself and have to find the venue. This is an adventure in itself! For my Rome writing workshop, I landed on

the **University of Washington's Rome Center**, right off the **Campo de' Fiore**, one of Rome's great squares. In Paris I secured a classroom at the **American Graduate School of Paris**, on **Boulevard Raspail**, a stone's throw from Paris's most famous organic produce street market. But nothing quite compares to my last London location!

London is an expensive city and I wasn't having much luck finding a location I could afford. Then a pal of mine, **Swedish Ann**, who lives with her husband on a seaworthy boat





Inside Victoria Pub



anchored at **St. Katherine's Docks** in the shadow of the **Tower of London**, pointed me in the direction of a favorite workshop spot of hers: **The Victoria pub** in **Paddington** just off **Hyde Park**.

The venue was perfect! The Victoria, in which **Charles Dickens** wrote a bit of **Our Mutual Friend**, possesses an atmospheric upstairs room right out of a Victorian novel. Up the narrow, windy stairs to the second floor with our cappuccinos and lattes grabbed at the first-floor bar (there would be more cappuccinos and lattes throughout the day), we settled into our workshop routine. Downstairs all was quiet, except for the lunch rush. My writers wrote and wrote.

My writing workshops are a little unusual. There are no exercises, no sharing of the writing, no critiquing, no lessons on craft, virtually nothing that you would expect to find in a writing workshop. Instead, I offer some short key lessons on the writing process and the writing life, lessons ten-or twenty-minutes long, and then the gathered writers write for half-an-hour, an hour, or more. The combination of a pertinent lesson and the opportunity to quietly work on your own heartfelt project produces quite amazing results.

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All of the writers were women and the pub owner began to call them "Eric's ladies." The ladies wrote and wrote. One, **Eva Weaver** of **Brighton**, recently saw her novel **The Puppet Boy of Warsaw** published in multiple languages and to much fanfare. It is fair to say that a bit of both **Our Mutual Friend** and **The Puppet Boy of Warsaw** got written at the Victoria, 150 years apart but in the same exact tradition, the tradition of writers writing in cafés and pubs!

I remember an earlier writing workshop in London, a few years before the Victoria pub workshop, where we took over a whole house on the hip pedestrian-only **Lambs Conduit Street** in bustling **Bloomsbury**. The group chose as its afternoon drinking pub, out of the very many available, including the **Marquis Cornwallis**, superb but a half-mile away, the **Perseverance**, pronounced like the psychological term and not the personality trait. It is hard to create a day better than a lot of writing and some afternoon camaraderie.

And then a meal! Our favorite spot was the cheerful, bustling Italian restaurant down the block, **Ciao Bella**, where many pizzas and pastas were consumed!

Whether or not you're a writer, it's wonderful to experience travel as a creative soul, as someone open to people-watching and whimsy, comfortable "doing nothing" as you take in the scene in some London pub or Paris café, content to daydream on the bench in front of **Keat's House** in North London, happy to wander through Freud's odd digs, very nearby, with its psychoanalytic couch piled high with chenille cushions and surrounded by Tabriz rugs, eager to let your imagination run wild.

That is the good life, writer or not. And if you are a writer and want to come write with me, my next **European workshop** takes place in **Paris** from **June 16 - 20, 2014**. I have a certain jazz café on **Boulevard Montparnasse** in mind for our evening soirees ...

Visit **Eric Maisel** at <http://www.ericmaisel.com>. To learn more about Dr. Maisel's Paris Deep Writing Workshop, please visit <http://ericmaisel.com/paris-deep-writing-workshop/>

