

Mark Tredinnick
Writing Master Class in Sri Lanka
1-13 October 2008

Five centuries before Christ, Sri Lanka was a land throbbing with vitality and a well-ordered civilization. Cities, palaces, reservoirs, parks, temples, monasteries, monuments and works of art bore testament to the character, imagination, culture, philosophy and faith of the people of Sri Lanka, the Resplendent Land. Vestiges of this ancient civilization are abundantly extant today.



"To me the beauty of Ceylon lies not so much in its blue seas and golden beaches, its jungles and its mountain peaks, as in its ancient atmosphere. There is no nation, from Egypt of the Pharaohs to modern Britain, in whose literature this island has not at some time been mentioned by one or other of its many names...History lies buried in its sands, and ghosts of romance lurk among its bastioned rocks, for Lanka is very, very old."

D. J. G. Hennessy, GREEN AISLES, 1949



THE CREATIVE WRITERS' MASTERCLASS OVERVIEW

Course Description

This practical and inspiring course starts at an elevation of 4000 feet in the lush tea fields of Hatton and finishes in the ancient City of Sigiriya, in the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka. It is a workshop designed to inspire and nurture anyone who wants to kick start or deepen their creative writing. Are you trying to finish a book, are you trying to start one? Are you caught—perhaps even lost—somewhere in the middle? Here's a chance to wonder and read and listen and delve and write and rewrite; here's a chance, in the heart of the beautiful hill country of Sri Lanka, to make your book better, to start your writing or to bring it closer to its end.

The workshop is open to writers of all levels. It looks at creative writing of all kinds, short and long fiction, poetry, memoir and narrative nonfiction. The program includes six half-day sessions and plenty of time for writing, reading, reflection and consultation with Mark. Each session, interspersed with days of leisure and travel, explores ideas and practices to do with creativity, composition, style, plotting, planning, editing and publishing your work. Each day, you'll also have a chance to share pieces of writing you've composed overnight, thoughts about your writing progress and your responses to the daily readings.

Learning Outcomes

What makes writing worth writing and reading is what the story or the poem achieves beyond the tale it tells: its music, its wisdom, its form, the way it makes the ordinary world beautifully strange. A good tale is only good if the telling is sound and memorable. It's the voice and mood, the arc and flow, the poetry of the writing that endure when the storyline starts to fade.

How a piece of writing becomes a work of art, a plain but unforgettable thing, has everything to do with the integrity and humanity of its voice and the elegance of its composition.

And so, The Creative Writers' Masterclass emphasizes the importance of finding one's voice, of crafting stylish sentences and composing cohesive works. It also explores ways to deepen one's creativity and to develop a sustainable writing practice.

And each day we'll work on writing exercises.

Come and find the history and mystery in the sands and rivers, the mountains and plains and tea plantations of Sri Lanka.

Come and:

- *Solve problems and find new ways forward with whatever you're writing*
- *Learn with and from other creative writers at work like you*



- Pick up tips on structure and voice and syntax and other matters from the feedback of your colleagues and your workshop leader
- Practise creativity and writing techniques in response to selected readings and writing exercise
- Learn more about the divine dichotomy of writing, the meridian you hold between fierce attentiveness and reckless abandon, in safety.

Your Workshop Leader

Mark Tredinnick (BA (Hons), LLB (Hons), BMA, PhD), author of *The Little Red Writing Book* (2006), is an award-winning Australian poet and essayist. He is also perhaps Australia's most experienced, beloved and successful teacher of creative and business writing. He has taught writing for twelve years at The University of Sydney and writers' centres across Australia. Mark was for ten years a book publisher and before that a lawyer.

Mark's honours include the Calibre Essay Prize (2008), the Gwen Harwood poetry Prize (2005), the Newcastle Poetry Prize (2007), the Wildcare Nature Writing Prize (2005), as well as shortlistings in many literary awards. His poetry and essays have appeared in *Best Australian Essays*, *Australian Book Review*, *Island*, *isotope*, *Manoa*, *Mascara*, *Orion* and other journals. He reviews and writes regularly for newspapers including *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Mark's other books include *A Place on Earth* (2003), *The Land's Wild Music* (2005), and the forthcoming landscape memoir *The Blue Plateau* (2009).

Mark's acclaimed and bestselling writing manual *The Little Red Writing Book* was published in late 2006 by UNSW Press in Australia; re-titled *Writing Well: the Essential Guide*, it was published by Cambridge University Press throughout the English speaking world in July 2008. The book articulates everything Mark has learned and not yet forgotten as a book publisher, writer and writing teacher. The book is widely acclaimed and relied on by aspiring creative writers, university students and their teachers, business writers and journalists.

Mark has taught, read and spoken at writing festivals and universities around Australia and the United States, including the University of Alaska and the famous Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Mark's popular and inspiring workshops explore the disciplines of composition, style, thought and grammar, along with the graces and fine arts, that underlie the very best writing, both functional and literary. Recently he has begun the Cowshed Classes, long-haul writing workshops run from his converted cowshed in Burradoo (rural New South Wales). He has been a judge of the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and the Annual Report Awards. When he isn't writing, teaching or helping to parent his three young children, he mentors emerging writers and edits manuscripts. He is at work on a collection of poems, a book about the consolations of literature and *The Little Green Grammar Book*.





WHAT IS YOUR INVESTMENT?

Land only (ex Colombo):

\$6,850 per person (based on twin-share accommodation)

\$1,000 single supplement for single room

Air Travel:

There is no group airfare for this tour. For flight information and to purchase airfares in connection with this tour, please contact Forge Travel, (02) 88831480 or sales@forgetravel.com or contact your preferred travel agent.

The land costs are based on a maximum of 15 tour participants. A deposit of \$500 per person is required to reserve a place on the tour. The full balance is due 60 days before departure.

What is included in the land tour cost?

- Services of workshop leader and tour manager from Colombo
- A copy of Mark Tredinnick's *The Little Red Writing Book*
- All breakfasts, lunches and dinners (some drinks included in Tea Trails, Hatton)
- Afternoon tea on the lawns at Tea Trails
- 4-5 star accommodation at Cinnamon Grand Colombo, Tea Trails, Jetwing Vil Uyana and Galle Face Hotel Regency
- While on tour, ground transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Air-conditioned transport from Katunayake International Airport to Colombo and then to Tea Trails, Hatton
- Air-conditioned transport from Hatton to Jetwing Vil Uyana in Sigiriya and back to Colombo
- Excursions including admission to all sites and temples mentioned in the itinerary
- The services of expert tour guides in the Cultural Triangle
- Group tips for drivers
- Porterage (one piece per person) for group arrivals and departures in and out of hotels and at Katunayake International Airport
- 6 writing workshops, notes and background talks
- Pre-departure meeting and dinner in Sydney
- End of workshop cocktail party/dinner in Colombo





What is not included in the cost?

- *Travel insurance (this is a requirement for attending the workshop)*
- *Airline and departure taxes*
- *Visa costs (not required if stay in Sri Lanka is under four weeks)*
- *Meals and activities not mentioned in the itinerary, or listed as optional*
- *Tips for individual services*
- *Personal expenses such as laundry, phone and fax bills, internet usage costs and other incidentals*

DETAILED ITINERARY

Wednesday 01 October: Cinnamon Grand Colombo

*Arrive Katunayake International Airport
Check-in to Cinnamon Grand Colombo.*

<http://www.cinnamonhotels.com/Grand/CinnamonGrand.htm>

Overnight Colombo

Thursday 02 October: Tea Trails, Hatton

This morning we have an early breakfast and depart for Tea Trails, Hatton in an air-conditioned coach. The drive is approximately 4 hours and takes us through spectacular scenery and lush tea plantations. The Tea Country is the most scenic part of Sri Lanka with breathtaking views of mountain ranges and ravines, of winding roads and waterfalls.

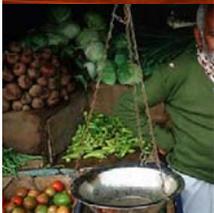
Ceylon Tea Trails is a collection of four beautifully restored plantation bungalows set around a picturesque lake. These bungalows were originally built for British tea managers during the Raj. Each bungalow comes with its own chef, butler and manager. Although the bungalows are located several kilometers apart the group will come together for the workshop, all group activities and most meals. We arrive at Tea Trails bungalows mid-morning.

<http://www.teatrails.com/location.htm>

After lunch Mark conducts the first of the six workshops.

What's writing for? 2.00pm-5.00pm

- *How we will work together.*
- *The nature of creative writing, how it happens, how it works on a reader. How it is less purposive and more like work than we imagine.*
- *How writing is talking, heightened by art, and set down on paper.*
- *Why it matters that the writing lasts and the speaking doesn't.*





- *How the story's in the telling not the plot.*
- *What works and what doesn't.*
- *Fiction and non-fiction, voice and self, music and place.*
- *How the universal speaks out of the particular.*
- *Compression, density, slowness, speed, hereness and gaps.*
- *The art of indirection.*

Overnight at Tea Trails.

Friday 03 October: Tea Trails, Hatton

After breakfast Mark conducts the second workshop.

From a deep place. 9.00am-1.00pm

- *Writing what we don't know about what we do.*
- *Writing from the very centre of ourselves, out of everything we are and everywhere we've been and whom we've been there with.*
- *The necessary strangeness of one's own perception and mind and voice.*
- *Writing from now for all time.*
- *Glimpse memories.*
- *Points of view.*
- *Plot, story, song, narrative, description, exposition.*

Overnight at Tea Trails

Afternoon at leisure to write or explore the town

Saturday 04 October: Tea Trails, Hatton

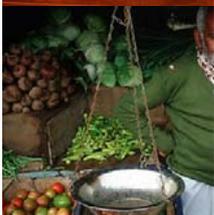
The morning is at leisure to explore the "Tea Experience" with the Tea Trails Planter in Residence. Follow the trail of the planters of old Ceylon, as they trekked through the dense jungle looking for the best slopes on which to plant tea. Then on to watch the tea pluckers pick two leaves and a bud with deft hands. We visit a tea factory to see the care with which the leaves are dried and processed for the "single origin tea" that Ceylon tea is famed for.

Evening: 7.00pm Reception in the beautiful living room. Readings/evening with Sri Lankan Writers

Overnight at Tea Trails

Sunday 05 October: Tea Trails, Hatton

This morning Mark conducts the third workshop.





The writer's toolbox. 9.00am-1.00pm

- *Why less is generally more*
- *Plain and fancy style.*
- *How fashionable writing, by definition, goes out of fashion, but stylish writing never does.*
- *The art of the sentence, the intelligent vernacular, the elements of style, verbs, rationing your modifiers.*
- *The secrets of plot and pace and place and speech and character.*

In the afternoon is a guided walk from Tea Trail bungalow to Tea Trail bungalow stopping along the way for afternoon tea on the lawn at one of the bungalows.

Overnight at Tea Trails

Monday 06 October: Tea Trails, Hatton

Mark conducts the fourth workshop.

Wild mind: tidy mind. 9.00am-1.00pm

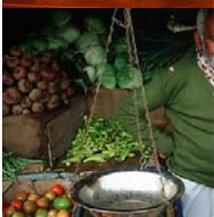
- *Why form and structure count and how they help.*
- *Why it's a good idea to get an idea early of the kind of book or poem, story or essay you're writing.*
- *Getting started.*
- *Keeping going.*
- *Knowing when you're done.*
- *The Tao of the long-distance writer.*

Overnight at Tea Trails

Tuesday 07 October: Jetwing Vil Uyana

After breakfast we say our farewells to Teal Trails and travel in air-conditioned coach to the ancient cities and Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka where we will be based for the next four nights. The Cultural Triangle lies on Sri Lanka's dry central plains and houses some of its most celebrated attractions, including the Lion Rock of Sigiriya, where the remains of a 5th Century fortress palace sit 600ft above the surrounding countryside, the medieval capital of Polonnaruwa, once protected by 3½ miles of walls and the ancient city of Anuradhapura once the greatest monastic city of the ancient world. Abandoned in 1073 to the mercy of the jungle, the British explorers who discovered it in the 19th Century thought they had stumbled on a "lost" city.

After lunch we visit the rock fortress of Sigiriya, considered the eighth wonder of the modern world, a monolith rising 600 feet from the flat green scrub jungle, it once contained the palace and gardens of the patricide King Kassapa. As you





ascend view the famous "Sigiriya Maidens' frescoes painted on the face of the rock. Continue upwards through the giant "Lions Paws' and arrive at the summit to marvel at the astounding feat of imagination and engineering that enabled elaborate palaces and pools to be built atop this incredible rock platform.

Wednesday 08 October: Jetwing Vil Uyana

Today Mark conducts the fifth workshop

The practice of silence. 9.00am-1.00pm

- Some prose and poetry forms.
- The importance of form.
- What you put in and what you leave out: "crowding and leaping".
- The art of slowness: the art of gap.
- Non-writing.
- Unwriting.
- Rewriting.
- Formatting (how to keep writing when you're not writing).

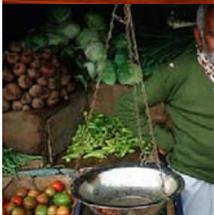
This afternoon we visit the ancient city of Anuradhapura. Anuradhapura was made the royal capital in 380BC. It remained residence and royal capital for 119 successive Sinhalese kings until the year 1000AD when it was abandoned and the capital moved to Polonnaruwa. Here you will see the tallest dagoba of Sri Lanka, remains from palaces, temples, monasteries, ceremonial baths and the temple of the holy Bo-tree. This tree was grown from a sapling of the tree under which, more than 2500 years ago, the Buddha found enlightenment.

Thursday 09 October: Jetwing Vil Uyana

Today you can either spend your day at leisure or visit Polonnaruwa. Tour the archaeological sites of this ancient Capital of Ceylon, a city which reached its height of glory in the 12th century. The site is a spectacular reminder of kingly vision and drive. There is the Royal Palace with its audience hall, bathing pool and quadrangle. Close by is the Circular Relic House, a beautifully preserved round structure that has an elaborate 'Moonstone' carved at the foot of a flight of steps. Another famous feature of this ancient city is the group of carved images of the Buddha at the Gal Vihara - three colossal figures all hewn out of solid granite.

On our return journey we transfer to a jeep for a safari of Minneriya National Park, one of the many eco tourism locations in Sri Lanka. The park consists of mixed evergreen forest and scrub areas and is home to Sri Lanka's favourite wildlife such as sambar deer, leopard and elephant. However the central feature of the park is the ancient Minneriya Tank (built in the 3rd century AD by King Mahasena). During the dry season (June to September), this tank is an incredible place to observe the elephants that come to bathe and graze on the grasses. There are also huge flocks of birds (cormorants and painted storks to name but a few) that come to fish in the shallow waters of the tank.





Friday 10 October: Jetwing Vil Uyana

Mark conducts the sixth and final workshop

The finish . 9.00.am-1.00pm

- *The draft and the many redrafts.*
- *Editing yourself and being edited.*
- *Making the work ready to publish.*
- *How and where and why (and why not) to get published.*

In the afternoon we climb the ancient rock temple of Dambulla that forms a part of the Cultural Triangle. The name Dambulla derives from the Sanskrit words Damba - Rock and Ulla - fountain. You can see the incessant drip of water from within the main image house. The Dambulla cave monastery is still functional and remains the best preserved ancient edifice in Sri Lanka. This complex dates from the third and second Centuries BC. This complex is one of the most impressive Buddhist Temples in the world.

Saturday 11 October: Galle Face Hotel Regency, Colombo

Travel to Colombo

Lunch at Galle Face Hotel Regency

The afternoon is free to spend relaxing at the hotel, doing some last minute shopping or sight-seeing.

Evening cocktails on the terrace at Galle Face Hotel Regency

Farewell dinner at The Gallery Restaurant, Colombo

Overnight Galle Face Regency

<http://www.gallefacehotel.com/>

Sunday 12 October: Depart Katunayake International Airport

There is a group transfer from Galle Face Regency to Katunayake International Airport.



Additional Information

Accommodation

Hotels (4-5 star) for this tour have been selected for their superb service and location. Porterage (one piece of luggage per person) is included for group arrivals and departures in and out of hotels and at the airport.

Pre-Departure Meeting

Approximately two weeks before your departure there will be an evening meeting and dinner in Sydney. This is so you get to meet your Workshop Leader and traveling companions.

Weather

In October the weather is cool and damp in Hatton. The evenings can be quite cold so please make sure you have a jumper or jacket. The average temperature in Hatton in October is 11 - 20°C.

How To Book

Bookings of land arrangements can be made with Sage Training by completing the booking form on <http://sagetraining.org/> and returning it with a photocopy of your passport details and insurance policy to the address below. Other additional travel arrangements can be made through our preferred travel agent or your own travel agent.

Sage Training Australia

Telephone: (02) 9436 2407 or Diane Inman 0431 914 358

Email: office@SageTraining.Org

Web: <http://sagetraining.org/>

Postal address:

Sage Training Australia

PO Box 87

Concord West NSW 2138

Your Tour Manager

Romany Van der Wall - Director, Blue Lotus Tours

Romany is one of the founders of Blue Lotus Tours. She was instrumental in setting up the operation and running it until her return to Australia in 2007. She has a passionate love for Sri Lanka and it extends to wanting others to share the enjoyment of its historical and national treasures. Her suggestions for places to visit are carefully considered and provide visitors to Sri Lanka with just the right choice of what is on offer, in the time available.

