

# BETTER READ TOURS

Writers Retreats - Experienced Mentors - Inspiring Locations

Recommended Reading List

# MEMOIR WRITING

with

PATTI MILLER

Paris, France  
June 10-24 2021

# RECOMMENDED READING LIST

*'...Paris is first and always a city inscribed, a city that can only be seen through a fine lace of words and images...'*

*Gertrude's Footsteps*  
Patti Miller, *The Age*

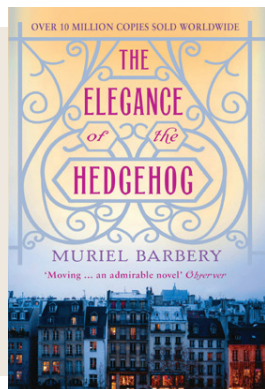
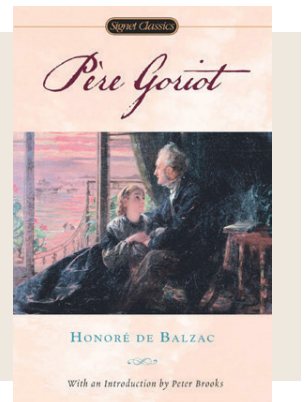
**A few Paris 'lace-makers' from various countries – and centuries:**

## FICTION

### ***Le Père Goriot* (1835)**

Honoré de Balzac

In *Père Goriot*, the great novelist probes the “bourgeois tragedy” of money and power from two different directions. While Goriot is willingly reduced to poverty to support his ambitious daughters, an impoverished young man of integrity becomes money hungry. Attracted to one of Goriot's daughters, Rastignac succumbs to the fever of social climbing. The resulting tale is a commentary on wealth and human desire that still rings true in the twenty-first century.



### ***The Elegance of the Hedgehog* (2006)**

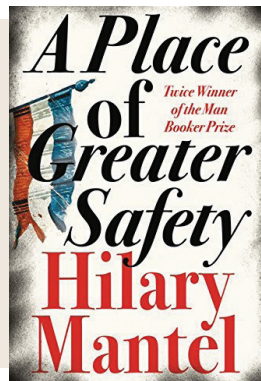
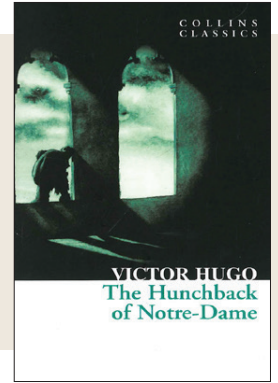
Muriel Barbery

Barbery's heartfelt and hilarious novel quickly became a beloved international bestseller. Centred in a grand Parisian apartment building, it tells of a concierge with a hidden passion for culture and the arts and a highly intelligent adolescent facing a privileged but vacuous future whose lives are dramatically altered by the unexpected death of one of the building's residents. Barbery is a novelist and a philosophy teacher, and her novel is peppered with deep thoughts, poetic observations, and Parisian charm.

## **The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1831)**

Victor Hugo

'Love is like a tree, it grows of its own accord, it puts down deep roots into our whole being.' Set in medieval Paris, against the backdrop of the brooding Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Hugo's take on the classic story of *Beauty and the Beast* tells of the hunchbacked, grotesque bellringer, Quasimodo and his love for the only woman that pities him, a gypsy named Esmerelda.



## **A Place of Greater Safety (1862)**

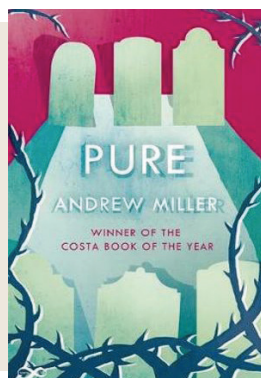
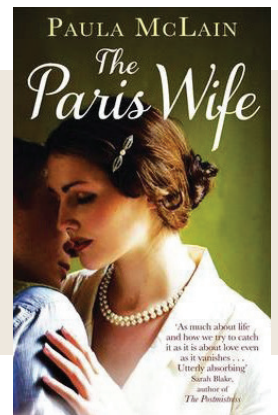
Hilary Mantel

Hilary Mantel, double Man Booker prize-winner, penned this epic novel of the French Revolution. It is an extraordinary work which recounts the events between the fall of the Ancient Regime and the peak of the Terror, as seen through the eyes of the French Revolution's three protagonists – Georges-Jacques Danton, Maximilien Robespierre and Camille Desmoulins, men whose mix of ambition, idealism, and ego helped unleash the darker side of the Revolution's ideals and brought them eventually to their own tragic ends.

## **The Paris Wife (2012)**

Paula McLain

This bestselling novelisation of Ernest Hemingway's marriage to Hadley Richardson is an evocative portrait of Jazz Age Paris and its ambitious artists and writers. The story is a wonderful companion to Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, telling the inevitably tragic story of love and betrayal through the eyes of his quiet, dignified first wife.



## **Pure (2011)**

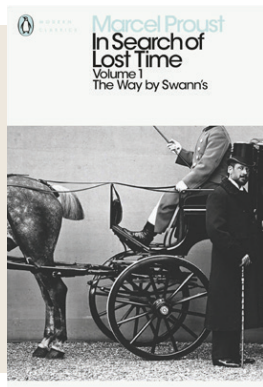
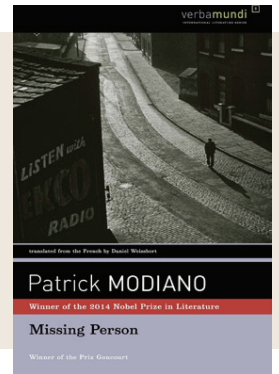
Andrew Miller

Deep in the heart of Paris, its oldest cemetery is, by 1785, overflowing, tainting the very breath of those who live nearby. Into their midst comes Jean-Baptiste Baratte, a young, provincial engineer charged by the king with demolishing it. At first Baratte sees this as a chance to clear the burden of history, a fitting task for a modern man of reason. But before long, he begins to suspect that the destruction of the cemetery might be a prelude to his own.

## Missing Person (1978)

Patrick Modiano

Modiano is a French novelist, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, and has been called the Marcel Proust of our time. *Missing Person*, first published in 1978, was awarded the Prix Goncourt. On one level, *Missing Person* is a detective thriller, a 1950s film noir mix of smoky cafes, illegal passports, and insubstantial figures crossing bridges in the fog. On another level, it is a haunting meditation on the nature of the self.



## In Search of Lost Time (1913-1927)

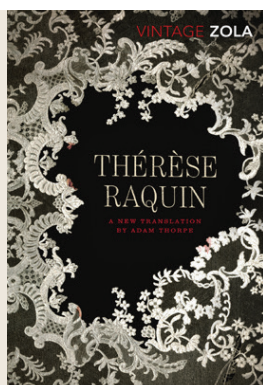
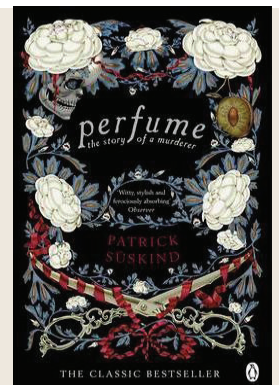
Marcel Proust

*The Way by Swann's* is one of the great novels of childhood, depicting the impressions of a sensitive boy of his family and neighbours, brought dazzlingly back to life by the famous taste of a madeleine. It contains the separate short novel, *A Love of Swann's*, a study of sexual jealousy that forms a crucial part of the vast, unfolding structure of *In Search of Lost Time*. This book established Proust as one of the greatest voices of the modern age – satirical, sceptical, confiding and endlessly varied in his responses to the human condition.

## Perfume (1985)

Patrick Suskind

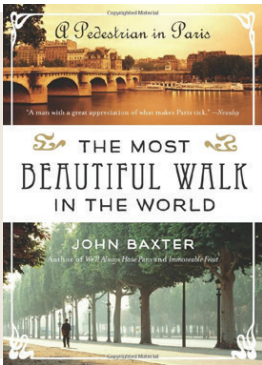
Survivor, genius, perfumer, killer – this is Jean-Baptiste Grenouille. He is abandoned on the filthy streets of Paris as a child, but grows up to discover he has an extraordinary gift – a sense of smell more powerful than any other human's. Soon, he is creating the most sublime fragrances in all the city. Yet there is one odour he cannot capture. It is exquisite, magical – the scent of a young virgin. And to get it he must kill. And kill. And kill... Suskind's novel has become a modern classic for its terrifying examination of a man's indulgence in his passion.



## Thérèse Raquin (1962)

Émile Zola

When Thérèse Raquin is forced to marry the sickly Camille, she sees a bare life stretching out before her, leading every evening to the same cold bed and every morning to the same empty day. Escape comes in the form of her husband's friend, Laurent, and Thérèse throws herself headlong into an affair. There is only one obstacle to their happiness; Camille. They plot to be rid of him, but in destroying Camille they kill the very desire that connects them. First published in 1867, *Thérèse Raquin* has lost none of its power to enthrall. Adam Thorpe's unflinching translation brings Zola's dark and shocking masterwork to life.



### **The Most Beautiful Walk in the World: A Pedestrian in Paris (2011)**

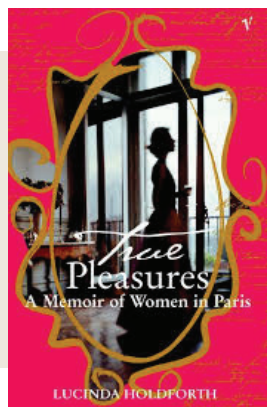
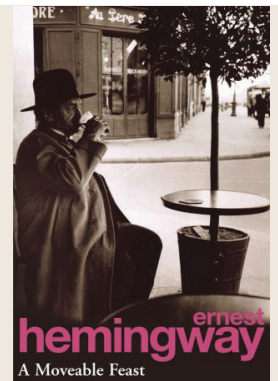
John Baxter

Acclaimed author and expat John Baxter details his year as a professional “literary walking tour” guide in Paris with great wit and local insight. He reveals the favourite cafés of Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and James Joyce; Pablo Picasso’s underground Montmartre haunts; the bustling boulevards of the late-nineteenth-century flâneurs; the secluded “Little Luxembourg” gardens beloved by Gertrude Stein; the alleys where revolutionaries plotted; and finally Baxter’s own favourite walk near his home in Saint- Germain-des-Prés.

### **A Moveable Feast (1964)**

Ernest Hemingway

‘If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.’ In this delectable memoir, published posthumously, Hemingway shares his memories of life as a poor, unknown writer living in Paris alongside the future literary stars. These anecdotes from a writer discovering his vocation – as well as tales of his friends James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald and Gertrude Stein – are deeply personal and imbued with warmth, generosity, and sweet nostalgia.



### **True Pleasures (2004)**

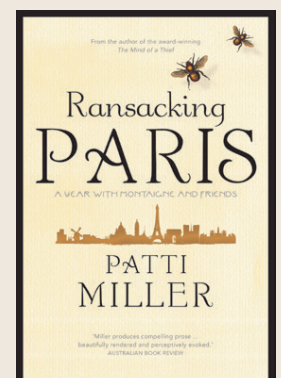
Lucinda Holdforth

Facing a turning point in her life, Lucinda Holdforth journeyed to Paris to see what she could learn through the lives, loves and losses of the city’s infamous women. From Colette to Nancy Mitford; Marie Antoinette to Coco Chanel; Napoleon’s Josephine to Edith Wharton; Holdforth follows in their footsteps and finds inspiration in these rebellious women who made Paris the dazzling city it is today.

### **Ransacking Paris (2015)**

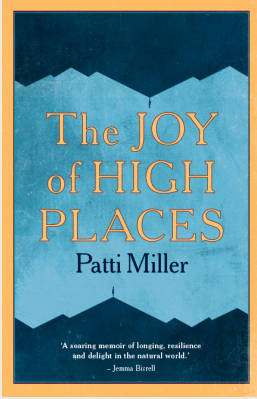
Patti Miller

When Patti Miller arrives to write in Paris for a year, the world glows ‘as if the light that comes after the sun has set had spilled gold on everything.’ But wasn’t that just romantic illusion? Miller grew up on Wiradjuri land in country Australia where her heart and soul belonged. What did she think she would find in Paris that she couldn’t find at home? How could she belong in this city made of other people’s stories? She turns to French writers, Montaigne, Rousseau, de Beauvoir and other memoirists, each one intent on knowing the self through gazing into the ‘looking glass’ of the great world. Exploring truth and illusion, self knowledge and identity, and family and culture, Miller evokes the beauty, the contradictions and the daily life of contemporary Paris.



## ***The Joy of High Places* by Patti Miller (2019)**

Patti Miller

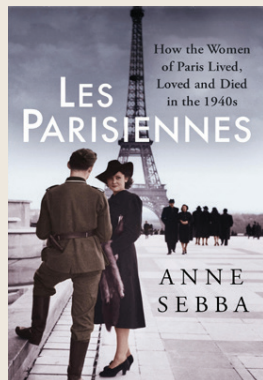
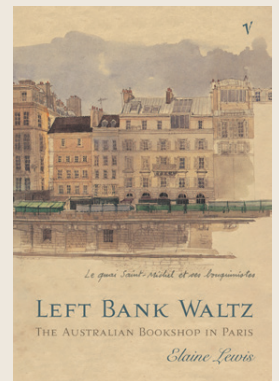


In this extraordinary and unexpected book, Patti tells the story of her own long-distance walking over hundreds of kilometres in Europe and of her brother's obsession with paragliding. As adults, a tragic accident changes their relationship. One day, Barney's wing collapses and he plummets to earth, breaking his spine. The story of his struggle to walk again intersects Patti's long-distance journeys, creating an intense narrative of determination and triumph. For Patti, walking is a radical act – a return to what has made us all human – that bestows a connection to wild nature and to creativity itself. But as she listens to her pragmatic and methodical brother tell his story, she learns that flying is his door to untrammelled joy too. She realises that she is 'meeting' him for the very first time. This beautiful and inspiring book tells their story and reveals that the siblings share a willingness to take risks and an indefatigable determination. With rare insight and poetic writing, *The Joy of High Places* combines physical adventure with a powerful emotional journey.

## ***Left Bank Waltz* (2006)**

Elaine Lewis

At a time in her life when friends were retiring and spending time with their grandchildren, a night out in Paris while she visited her musician son inspired Elaine Lewis to dream of a daring venture in this most enchanting of cities. Elaine packed her bags and left Australia to open, on the Left Bank, the first Australian bookshop in central Paris. Full of incredible energy and enthusiasm, and with the help of locals and visiting Australians, she created her shop in the heart of the St-Germain-des-Prés literary quarter. Her cosy literary haven quickly became an important cultural centre and a home away from home for Australian writers and artists in Paris.



## ***Les Parisiennes* (2016)**

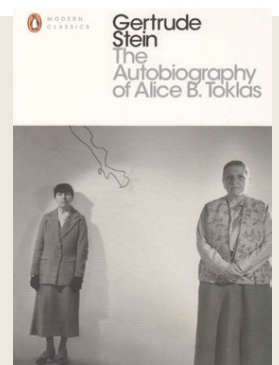
Anne Sebba

German troops enter Paris and hoist the swastika over the Arc de Triomphe. The dark days of Occupation begin. How would you have survived? By collaborating with the Nazis, or risking the lives of you and your loved ones to resist? The women of Paris faced this dilemma every day – whether choosing between rations and the black market, or travelling on the Metro, where a German soldier had priority for a seat. Between the extremes of defiance and collusion was a vast moral grey area which all Parisiennes had to navigate in order to survive. Anne Sebba has sought out and interviewed scores of women, and brings us their unforgettable testimonies.

## ***The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933)**

Gertrude Stein

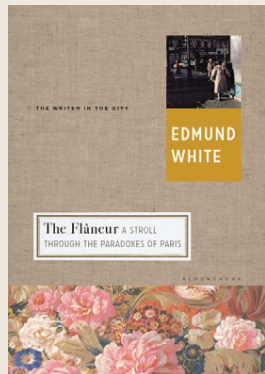
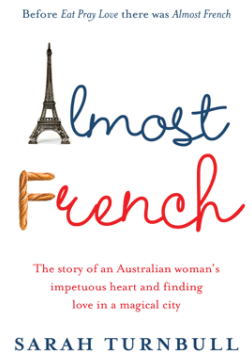
For Gertrude Stein and her wife Alice B. Toklas, life in Paris was based upon the rue de Fleurus and the Saturday evenings and 'it was like a kaleidoscope slowly turning.' Picasso was there, as were Cezanne and Matisse, Hemingway and Fitzgerald. A light-hearted entertainment, this is in fact Gertrude Stein's own autobiography and a roll-call of all the extraordinary painters and writers she met between 1903 and 1932. Audacious, sardonic and characteristically self-confident, this is a definitive account by American in Paris.



## Almost French (2002)

Sarah Turnbull

After backpacking her way around Europe, Australian journalist Sarah Turnbull is ready to embark on one last adventure before heading home to Sydney. A chance meeting with a charming Frenchman in Bucharest changes her travel plans forever. As she navigates the highs and lows of this strange new world, from the sophisticated cafes and haute couture fashion houses to the picture postcard French countryside, little by little Sarah falls under its spell – passionate, mysterious, infuriating, and charged with that French specialty – seduction. And it becomes her home.



## The Flâneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris (2001)

Edmund White

A *flâneur* is a stroller, a loiterer, someone who ambles through city streets in search of adventure and fulfilment. Edmund White, who lived in Paris for sixteen years, wanders through the streets and avenues and along the quays, into parts of Paris virtually unknown to visitors and indeed to many Parisians. In the hands of the learned White, a walk through Paris is both a tour of its lush, sometimes prurient history, and an evocation of the city's spirit. *The Flâneur* leads us to bookshops and boutiques, monuments and palaces, giving us a glimpse the inner human drama.

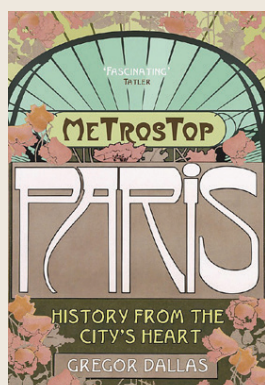
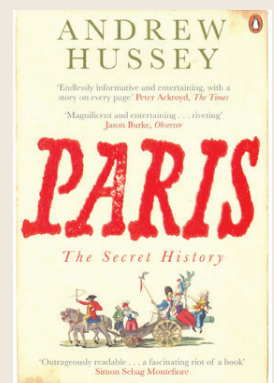
## Plus two histories, four literary guides and one children's book:

### History

## Paris: The Secret History (2006)

Andrew Hussey

Paris is the city of light and the city of darkness – a place of ceaseless revolution and reinvention that for two thousand years has drawn those with the highest ideals and the lowest morals to its teeming streets. In Andrew Hussey's *Paris: The Secret History* we encounter the myriad citizens whose stories have shaped Paris – the nineteenth century flâneurs aimlessly wandering Haussmann's new streets; survivors and victims of ravaging plagues; the builders of Notre Dame Cathedral; those who turned the River Seine red on St Bartholemew's Day in 1572; and the many others whose lives have imprinted themselves a city that has always roused strong emotions.

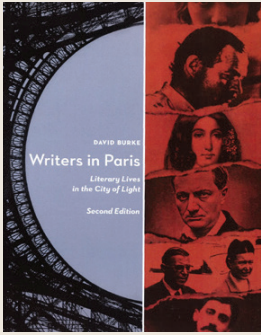


## Metrostop Paris: History from the city's heart (2008)

Gregor Dallas

The name of every Parisian metro tells a story. In *Metrostop Paris*, Gregor Dallas recounts a series of extraordinary but true tales about the city as he leads his readers around the metro. Both the armchair traveller and the visitor will enjoy an illuminating journey in the company of a compelling storyteller and veteran of the city. The book includes visits to Paris catacombs at Hell's Gate, the literary cafes and old jazz cellars of Montparnasse and Saint-Germain-des Pres and the seventeenth-century alleys of the Marais, along with trips to the Palais-Royal at the time of the Revolution and the world of opera during Claude Debussy's lifetime.

## Literary Guides



### **Writers in Paris (2008)**

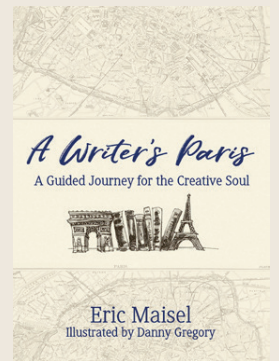
David Burke

No city has attracted so much literary talent, launched so many illustrious careers, or produced such a wealth of enduring literature as Paris. From the 15th century through the 20th, poets, novelists, and playwrights, famed for both their work and their lives, were shaped by this enchanting locale. From natives such as Molière, Genet, and Anais Nin, to expats like Henry Miller, Samuel Beckett, and Gertrude Stein, author David Burke follows hundreds of writers through Paris's labyrinthine streets, inviting readers on his grand tour.

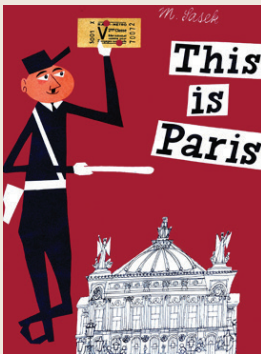
### **A Writer's Paris: A Guided Journey for the Creative Soul (2005)**

Eric Maisel

The symbolic home for creative people everywhere, Paris has been inspiration for countless artists and writers. In this dynamic book, well-loved author Eric Maisel gives writers the guidance they need to take a literal or figurative soul-renewing artistic sojourn in the city of light. Maisel shares with readers how and why to take a creative visit to Paris, provides logistics for those committed to a trip, and inspiration for those who hunger for a taste of the expat life. Filled with lessons and anecdotes that convey the spirit of the glorious city, this book will inspire anyone to create.



## Children's



### **This is Paris (1959)**

Miroslav Sasek

With the same wit and perception that distinguished his charming books on London, New York, and San Francisco, here this famous Czech painter presents his impressions of Paris. In *This Is Paris*, first published in 1959 and now updated for the 21st century, we see its famous buildings, its beautiful gardens, the museums, the sidewalk cafes, and the people who live there -- artists, the concierges, the flower girls, and even the thousands of cats. Take a tour along the banks of the Seine, or through the galleries of the Louvre, or to the top of the Eiffel Tower.

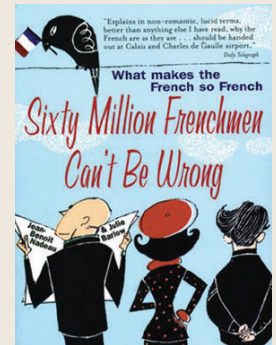


## And one very readable exploration of the French way of being:

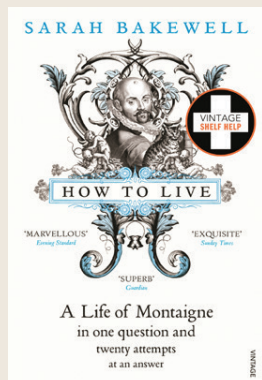
### *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong: Why We Love France but Not the French* (2003)

Jean-Benoit Nadeau & Julie Barlow

The French drink, smoke, and eat more fat than anyone in the world, yet they live longer and have fewer heart problems than the English and the Americans. They work 35- hour weeks and take seven weeks' paid holiday each year, yet they are the world's fourth-biggest economic power. So how do they do it? From a distance modern France looks like a riddle. It is both rigidly authoritarian, yet incredibly inventive; traditional (even archaic) yet modern; lacking clout on the international stage yet still hugely influential. But with the observations, anecdotes and analysis of the authors, who spent nearly three years living in France, it begins to make sense. This book weaves together the threads of French society, uncovering the essence of life in France and giving, for the first time, a complete picture of the French.



## And a favourite introduction to a favourite Frenchman:



### *How to Live: A Life of Montaigne in one question and twenty attempts at an answer* (2010)

Sarah Bakewell

How to get on well with people, how to deal with violence, how to adjust to losing someone you love? How to live? This question obsessed Renaissance nobleman Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, who wrote free-roaming explorations of his thought and experience unlike anything written before. Into these essays he put whatever was in his head – his tastes in wine and food, his childhood memories, the way his dog's ears twitched when it was dreaming, events in the appalling civil wars raging around him. Over four hundred years later, readers still come to him in search of companionship, wisdom and entertainment – and in search of themselves. This first full biography of Montaigne in English for nearly fifty years relates the story of his life by way of the questions he posed and the answers he explored.

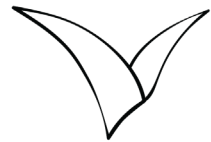
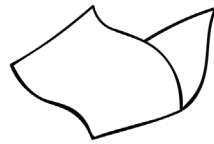
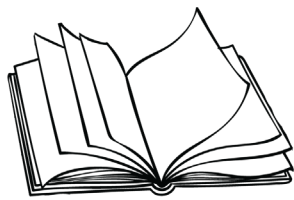
## And a favourite introduction to a favourite Frenchman:

Montaigne, Rousseau, Marcel Proust, (plus Englishman Alain de Botton's 'How Proust Can Save Your Life'), Henry Flaubert, George Sand, Balzac, Stendhal, Mme de Sévigné, Molière, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Voltaire, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Françoise Sagan, Colette, Michel Houellebecq, Patrick Modiano, Annie Ernaud – oh so many to delight in.

## And don't forget the Americans, Irish and others who came to write in Paris:

Henry Miller, Edith Wharton, Anais Nin, F Scott Fitzgerald, Jean Rhys, Henry James, Djuna Barnes, Nancy Mitford, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, George Orwell, Jack Kerouac – amongst many others.

**Read and enjoy!**  
Patti Miller



# TAKE THE JOURNEY

