

CENTAURI ARTS

Creative Writing Retreat

offered in partnership with Luz En Yucatan, Merida, Mexico

Saturday 29 November - Saturday 6 December 2025



Step away from the demands and distractions of the 'real world' as you make time for your writing and for yourself, nourished by the sights and sounds of a magical city and inspired by others who share your passion for words.

Welcome to our 15th annual escorted holiday for writers attending solo or with family or friends: a retreat held at Luz En Yucatan, a peaceful lodge in the heart of the cultural city of Merida.

Merida: The Cultural Heart of the Americas

It's possible to write anywhere, of course: but the pleasure of writing on a retreat lies in combining creative pursuits with the discovery of new friends, new places and new experiences. Founded in 1542, Merida is a beautiful colonial city with a vibrant cultural identity and a fascinating intermingling of Mayan and Spanish traditions. Tourists can choose to explore colourful markets bursting with exotic flavors, or sample a dazzling array of restaurants and cafes, many with pleasant courtyards perfect for writing. The city's focal point is the attractive Plaza de la Independencia, bordered by the fortress-like Merida Cathedral and the Governor's Palace, where you can view the striking and unforgettable murals by Fernando Castro Pacheco. The streets of Merida's many distinct neighborhoods, with their mint green, sherbet pink and bright peach facades, are clean and safe. Combine all this with a wealth of colonial architecture, world class museums and art galleries, and regular concerts in the evenings, and it's hard to imagine a more inspiring city in which to linger and write.



Merida is the capital city of the Yucatan Peninsula, which has a distinct and fascinating identity often missed by travelers who see only the mega resorts surrounding Cancun. December is one of the best times of the year to visit. Days are generally clear, and while the weather is pleasantly hot, travelers avoid the sweltering heat that often characterizes summer in this area.



Accommodation, Food and Transportation

Luz En Yucatan is a unique boutique hotel which regularly hosts retreats such as ours. It is situated on the site of an old convent and offers an atmosphere of cloistered peace and tranquility in the heart of a bustling city. Each room at Luz is unique. While all offer high quality linen, drinking water, AC and WiFi, some also have personal kitchens and patios overlooking the pool. At Luz, you can choose from a variety of serene spaces to write, indoors or outdoors. Tropical vegetation, Mayan statues, ochre walls and Mexican tiles create an ambience that cannot fail to inspire. Check out Luz on Trip Advisor; you'll be impressed by the reviews.



With the amenities of a cultural city such as Merida, meals are a delight. Writers can choose to purchase food from local bakeries and grocery stores, or sample a different restaurant every day. Join the group for lively conversation over each meal, or linger on an outdoor patio, and write.

Merida is easily accessed from anywhere in North America. The international airport is a short cab ride away and offers non-stop flights from Miami, Houston and Atlanta.

Alternately, you may wish to fly into Cancun, taking to bus from there to Merida, and combining our writing retreat with a few days on the Mayan Riviera. I am happy to offer travel suggestions at the time of booking.



Come Solo, or with Family or Friends

The endless sightseeing opportunities available in Merida and the surrounding area, and the range of room options at Luz, make this trip ideal for family and friends accompanying writers. Your guests may choose to explore the city or lounge by the pool while you enjoy our writing workshops each morning, and the afternoons are free for shared sightseeing. This said, most of our writers do attend solo. A retreat such as ours is the perfect opportunity to enjoy the companionship of others who share your interests, and make connections with writers from all over the world.



For more information on Luz En Yucatan, go to: www.luzenyucatan.com

Creative Writing Workshops

Our writing workshops take place in one of the comfortable seating areas at Luz, overlooking the pool. Each morning, we meet for 2-3 hours, exploring writing techniques, sharing prompts, discussing sources of inspiration and reading our work. Workshops are designed to meet the needs of writers working on short fiction, novels, memoir, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction or genre fiction, and are tailor-made to suit the interests of each group. Beginning writers are as welcome as those with experience, and many of our writers bring along projects already underway. Workshops may focus on character, plot, sources of inspiration, point of view, structure, editing techniques and the business of getting published. Writers have the opportunity to share their work with the group if they wish.

While afternoons are generally set aside for personal writing or sightseeing, our group will reconvene some evenings for writing-related activities. On past retreats, these have included readings by the instructor, lively discussions on the business of writing, and even guest speakers. Merida also offers the opportunity for site-specific writing in galleries or museums. Traditionally, the final evening of our retreat is set aside for a reading, during which our participants share their work with one another and celebrate the week's achievements.



Sightseeing Opportunities

If you need a break from writing, there is so much to do within the city of Merida, and a short drive away. Our trips will be booked for us by Luz after we arrive, so we can shape our week to suit the interests of participants, and writers can choose either to join excursions, or to devote themselves to their writing. Take a short bus ride to Progreso, and spend an afternoon on the beach. Enjoy a boat trip from Celestun, where you'll spot hundreds of flamingoes and maybe some crocodiles, too. Visit



Chichen Itza, one of the seven man-made wonders of the world, and discover an ancient civilization whose mysteries have inspired so many writers. Travel to Las Coloradas and marvel at a magical pink lake. Or - a personal favourite - visit Izamal, a town just an hour from Merida where every building, including the world famous Monastery, is painted a vibrant yellow.



Your Trip Leader and Creative Writing Instructor

Julie Hartley has more than 20 years' experience as a writer, retreat host, writing teacher and editor. Her young adult novel *The Finding Place* was published in 2015 by Red Deer Press, and this was followed in 2019 with a poetry collection, *Deboning a Dragon*, published by Mansfield Press. Julie has written more than a dozen plays, many of which have toured Canada, Ireland and the UK. These days, she writes historical fiction for Bookouture, a division of Hachette & Little, Brown. *Her Secret Soldier* was released in September 2024 and her latest novel – *The Promise She Made* – is due out in February 2025.



Julie has an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia. In her non-writing life she is co-director of Centauri Arts, which offers arts workshops year round for adults and teens. Julie enjoys nothing better than to inspire writers of all ages through retreats, classes and camps. In addition to her annual Mexico retreat, she runs writing courses at an ecolodge in Costa Rica, and in York, England.



To find out more, or to reserve your spot:

call 416-766-7124 or email julie@centauriarts.com

Prices

A deposit is payable directly to Centauri Arts, in Canadian dollars, at the time of booking. This fee covers the writing workshops and group leader services offered by Centauri Arts. The balance of fees is payable directly to Luz En Yucatan, in US dollars, 30 days prior to our trip. Any credit card can be used to pay each fee, regardless of which country you live in. To check the exact exchange rate on the date of payment, go to www.xe.com/currencyconverter/



Fee 1 - Deposit Payable on Registration

This fee includes services offered by Centauri Arts:

6 writing workshops (minimum total contact time - 15 hours)

A manual of writing prompts and techniques

Writing-related talks, readings and social activities

Group leader services, information on local activities, tour manual.

Writers:

\$699 CDN (approx 525 USD)

Non-writer, same room:

\$150CDN (approx. \$110 US)

(excludes writing workshops)



Fee 2 - Payable 30 Days Before Trip

Each room is slightly different; to select your room of choice please visit www.luzenyucatan.com.



Ground Floor Standard Rooms

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|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. El Cardenal | 1 Queen & 1 single | \$95.00 USD/night |
| 2.- El Tecolote | 1 Queen & 1 single | \$95.00 USD/night |

Upstairs Standard

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|-----------------------|----------|--------------------|
| 3.El Tucha | 2 Queens | \$105.00 USD/night |
| 4. El Iguano | 2 Queens | \$105.00 USD/night |
| 5. La Tortuga w/patio | 1 King | \$115.00 USD/night |
| 6.La Puesta Del Sol | 1 King | \$125.00 USD/night |

Poolside

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|----------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| 6. La Pina | 1 Queen | \$115.00 USD/night |
| 7. El Tulipan | 1 Queen | \$115.00 USD/night |
| 8. La Flor de Mayo w/patio | 2 Queens | \$125.00 USD/night |

One Bedroom

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|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 9. Los Dos Toros | 2 Queens | \$115.00 USD/night |
| 10. El Gallito | 2 Queens & 1 Single | \$115.00 USD/night |
| 11.Los Dos Camellos | 2 Queens | \$115.00 USD/night |

The retreat is 7 nights, but additional nights before or after can be booked at the same rate.

These rates are per night single occupancy and include full breakfast, welcome drink and all taxes. There is an additional charge of \$20 US per night for each additional guest in the room.

For more information on Luz En Yucatan, go to:

luzenyucatan.com/

Additional Costs

Airport Transfer: A taxi from Merida airport costs under \$20US

For meals during our retreat, choose from dozens of nearby cafes, grocery stores and restaurants. Budget \$12-25 US for a restaurant meal.

Many of the attractions in Merida are free, or inexpensive. Sightseeing options outside Merida may cost \$50-100US depending on the activity and the mode of transportation. Or, you may just wish to relax and write!

Our fees do not include your flight to Merida, nor medical insurance.

Please call +1 416 766 7124 to reserve space. You can also email: julie@centauriarts.com

Limited space is available. We keep our group small to ensure the best possible experience.

Booking Terms & Conditions

Your electronic signature on the Application Form designates you accept and are willing to be bound by the following terms and conditions for the Merida Writing Retreat offered by Centauri Summer Camp Inc. (hereafter referred to as “Centauri”)



Payment

A deposit of \$699 CDN is required at the time of booking, payable to Centauri. This covers our services. Your accommodation fee is payable directly to Luz En Yucatan in US dollars, 30 days before your arrival. Luz accepts Visa and Mastercard, and prefers payment using Paypal or Bank Transfer. If you wish to pay using your credit card there will be a surcharge of 3%.

Cancellation

If you must cancel the retreat once your deposit is paid, we will reimburse your deposit minus a \$350 CDN cancellation fee. No refund is offered if you cancel within 12 weeks of your trip.

Luz has the following cancellation fee: Cancellations 30 -7 days prior to arrival incur a 1 night penalty per room. The remaining fee paid will be offered as a credit towards future reservations booked and travelled within 1 year of cancellation. Cancellations 7 days or less prior to arrival will incur a 100% penalty per room.

In the event of cancellation by you or by us for any reason whatsoever, Centauri **can accept no responsibility for any expenses you incur**, beyond the fee paid directly to us for our services (“deposit”). This deposit will be refunded in full in the event that we must cancel this trip for any reason, and at that point, our liability shall cease. You are strongly advised to book refundable travel fares, and travel insurance, to cover potential losses arising from cancellation or any other eventuality affecting your booking, including COVID 19. Centauri is responsible only for the writing retreat portion of this trip, and all other reservations – including accommodations, flights and insurance – are your responsibility, financial and otherwise.

Flights

This is not a ‘package tour’ and your flight is not included in either the writing course fee, or the fee paid to Luz En Yucatan. Participants should aim, where possible, to arrive before 5pm on the first day of the trip, and depart after breakfast on the final day. In the event of delayed or cancelled flights, neither Centauri nor Luz En Yucatan can accept responsibility for financial losses incurred, and refunds cannot be offered for any portion of this trip.

A minimum of four writers is required to run this retreat. While we have always had more than 4 writers on previous retreats **please check with us about the status of the retreat before booking your flights!** In the event the trip cannot run, all monies paid to us will be refunded in full, but our liability shall then cease.

Travel Documents/Travel Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to check the validity of your travel documents, and to enquire in your country of citizenship about visa requirements. Centauri can accept no liability for problems with your travel documents and if you cannot join us for this trip for whatever reason, a refund cannot be offered. Check your passport is in date 6 months beyond the date of your return! In the case of vaccinations, it is your responsibility to ensure that you, your travel companions and children accompanying you have the recommended vaccinations. See your doctor or travel clinic to confirm requirements. If Mexico or your country of residence has travel requirements in place related to COVID-19 at the time of travel, it is your responsibility to research these and to comply. Centauri can accept no responsibility, financial or otherwise, if a participant is denied entry to the country, or cannot fly home on the date planned.

Itinerary

Centauri reserves the right to alter the itinerary in the case of situations beyond our control, or where we feel it is necessary to ensure the quality of the experience we offer, or the safety of our clients. We will make every effort to ensure alternatives are comparable. 'Itinerary' includes accommodations, writing instructor and other inclusions. Should any participant decide not to partake of any portion of this itinerary, no partial refund may be offered.

The Role of the Writing Instructor

The primary role of the writing instructor is to offer a top quality writing program during the retreat week. The instructor will also provide information on history, culture and local sites, organize writing-related activities and arrange social events to ensure a rich community experience. While the instructor is happy to advise on sightseeing opportunities and meals, and facilitate the arranging of them, the instructor may not accompany non-writing-related activities; this is not a package tour, so the cost of the instructor’s sightseeing is not included in your deposit fee.

Booking Terms & Conditions (Con't...)

Your Children

Families are welcome on this trip but Centauri can accept no responsibility for your children, and cannot act in a supervisory capacity. Children are in the care of their guardian, and remain their responsibility at all times.

Your Health

It is your responsibility to notify us at the time of booking of any medical needs you may have, and of any medical needs of other people in your group or family. Centauri cannot accept liability in the case of accident or illness, howsoever caused, unless as a direct result of our negligence. Medical insurance is essential for this trip, as it is for all overseas travel, and you should ensure that you purchase this before travelling. Should Centauri or its staff incur any medical expenses on your behalf during this tour, your signature on the application form indicates that you agree to accept full financial responsibility and reimburse Centauri within 7 days of the conclusion of the trip.

Liability Release & Assumption of Risks:

By signing the application form, you acknowledge that you understand accommodation, meals, sightseeing, airport transfers and other travel services will be purchased by you directly. Centauri can assume no responsibility for and cannot be held liable for any negligent or wilful act or failure to act of any company other than its own (Centauri Summer Camp Inc.). You agree not to hold Centauri responsible for the acts, omissions, negligence and/or financial default of any other company, including Luz En Yucatan.

Centauri cannot be held responsible for events or occurrences or delays due to any Force Majeure. 'Force Majeure' means any circumstances beyond the control of Centauri including (without limitation) strikes, terrorist activities, floods, tempests, fire, civil disturbance, sickness. In the case of a Force Majeure of any nature occurring prior to our trip, you accept it is in Centauri's sole and absolute discretion whether to proceed with the writing retreat portion of this trip. As your accommodation and flight are purchased separately by you, the decision whether to proceed with these portions of the trip is then yours alone.

You acknowledge that all travel involves an element of risk, and that Centauri cannot be held responsible for any accident or illness that may occur during the trip, nor can Centauri accept responsibility for any dangers to which you may be exposed. Your signature on the application form denotes that you assume all responsibility, financial and otherwise, for your own welfare, and for the welfare of others named on your application form, including minors, for the duration of this trip. Your signature also indicates you have discussed these booking conditions with all persons included in this booking, and they agree to be bound by them.

Your signature on the application form indicates that you agree to release, discharge and hold harmless forever Centauri Summer Camp Inc., its owners, employees, shareholders, affiliated entities, employees, agents, representatives, officers, directors, associates, successors and assigns from and against any liability, actions, causes of actions, debts, suits, claims and demands of any and every kind and nature whatsoever which may hereafter arise out of or in connection with this tour or participation in activities arranged by Centauri.

Any claims and/or lawsuits against Centauri, its directors, staff, volunteers, agents or assigns shall take place under the exclusive jurisdiction of the laws and regulations of Ontario, and the applicable law to be applied to any dispute shall be the laws of Ontario.

Privacy

By booking, you agree that we may collect and store personal information about you and your interactions with Centauri, including your personal contact details and medical needs. We will use this information to communicate with you occasionally about other courses we offer. We never share or sell information about our course participants with any third party. Your electronic signature on the application form indicates you understand photographs taken on this tour may be used for future promotional purposes.

Contact Information:

Tel.: 416 766 7124

email: julie@centauriarts.com

