**Holidays and Guesthouses with Spiri Tsintziras**

**Audio transcript**

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My name is Spiri Tsintziras, and I'm a writer and a teacher of writing. I often think of writing as a bit like drawing a picture or painting, a picture where you can create something really beautiful but with words and you can use your imagination.

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I know myself when I read books as a kid, they really sparked my imagination, and it feels like you can really use your imagination when you're writing real life stories. The trick is just to let yourself go. Don't worry about whether it's right or wrong or beautiful or not. What matters is that you enjoy the process of getting the ideas down and the words down.

1:01
I'm here today in the Alpine Retreat Hotel in Warburton in the Yarra Ranges. This particular hotel was built in 1885 and there were many such guest houses and hotels in this area during that time. People came here to experience nature and get away from it all. Often they travelled up from Melbourne by train. It attracted photographers, poets, artists and even writers like me.

1:31
Being in this space really captures my imagination. It makes me think about all the people that have passed through the guesthouse, and I kind of wonder what it must have been like for them coming here all that time ago. Did they go downstairs and meet other guests and talk about their day? Did they sit in the sitting room and play chess or cards, for example? Or did they simply sit by the window and look out into the forests and the stream below, perhaps write a little postcard to their families? The Yarra Rangers Regional Museum even have a postcard collection from the early 1900s.

2:08
Those questions make me curious. And if the guest house walls could speak, I wonder what sort of stories they would tell us about that time and about those people.

2:23
It's your turn to use your imagination now and imagine that you were staying in a guesthouse such as this one. The year is 1949. Remember, there was no Internet, There were no phones. There were no computers. So I invite you now to sit by the fire, look out the window, and write a postcard or a letter to a dear friend describing your time here. What sort of things might you focus on, and what sort of story do you have to tell?