

Welcome to “en plein air” which in French means “in the open air”. This manner of painting dates back to the 19th century and was a central feature of French Impressionism. It’s the practice of painting outdoors to capture the essence of a subject in its natural state. With the inventions of portable tubes of paint and easels the act of “painting out” has become extremely popular all over the world.

Supplies Primer:

It’s my first time painting en plein air....what should I bring?

Anyone can sketch a scene outdoors with just a few materials (paper and pencil) but if you want to paint there a few things you will need.

Portable easel/set up- Whether you use oil paint, watercolor, pastels or all mediums in between, you will need some sort of tripod with an attached easel and a place to put your palette with easy access to your other stuff. There are many brands and price points so only you know what you need.

Backpack- You need to get all your stuff from the car to that perfect spot to paint so make your gear easy to transport. Some painters use backpacks and some the lightweight beach wagons if they have a lot of gear.

Umbrella- Of course weather is a big factor in plein air. There is sun, rain and wind and usually you will encounter one or all of these in any paint out. An umbrella that attaches to the tripod can help with the sun and rain but wind can cause it to tip your set-up over. There are umbrellas that go into the ground which will protect you from all weather and normal wind. Sunscreen and sun hats, should be part of your set up

Clean up- Regardless of the medium there is usually some sort of cleaning up to be done when you are finished. Bring baby wipes, paper towels, and a plastic bag for taking home anything garbage-like.

Miscellaneous items- sketch pad, pencil, pen, eraser, camp chair, snacks and water to drink (stay hydrated!) fingerless gloves for cold days.

With time and experience you will learn what and how much to bring.