

# Plein Air Fun Facts

1. Brushes/Pallet knives/Sponges, etc.
2. Canvas or surface to paint on
3. Palette
4. Hat with a brim
5. Comfortable, old clothes
6. Water to drink as well as to paint if needed
7. Medium supplies, i.e. Gamsol, water, or whatever your medium needs, a holder or way to dispose of waste
8. Trash bag
9. Bug Spray
10. Fold up chair
11. Fold up Table
12. Old Shoes
13. Easel or something to set your surface on
14. Drawing pencil(s)
15. Eraser
16. Roll of paper towels or 3-4 old rags
17. Sketch pad
18. Box to hold supplies preferably on wheels.
19. Brush holder
20. Paints
21. Smile

Plein Air painting can be a scary adventure.... especially if you have never done it before. Above you will find a beginning list to get you started. Every artist who has ever gone into the field to paint will have their own personal list of have to take items to use, so yours will become more specialized as time goes on, but this will get you started.

So if you have supplies how do you get started....

Setting up to Paint:

1. Find a shady, level place to set up your palette, chair, and equipment. Being in the shade will allow you to see the colors of your subject and the color on your canvas more evenly.
2. Be sure you have a water supply available not only to paint, but to keep you hydrated.
3. Remember your hat with a brim, as it not only protects you, but it also allows you to see your colors more clearly.
4. Remember you will probably be here for a while, so you want it to be a spot that as the sun moves you can adapt easily or stay there a while in the shade to finish your piece.

So now your have a good spot to paint.... how do we paint...

What steps do you take:

1. Find something that either you are familiar with painting or that excites you to begin your first attempt at painting outdoors. As time goes on, I have friends who can paint a fire hydrant and make it a masterpiece. So as time goes on challenge yourself to stop and paint whatever you see and make it interesting instead of finding what is interesting and trying to paint it.

2. Narrow your field. One of the hardest things about painting outdoors is narrowing down your view. There is value in your finger boxes to create your view. You have seen it on TV, the guy holding his hand up and boxing in the view he wants to film or paint. A camera lens will do the same. You can zoom in and out with them, whereas your fingers show only one view.
3. Always take a photo of your view if nothing else to preserve your lighting and shadows. But not necessarily as what to paint, because a camera lens will alter the true vision you see to match its technology. Our eyes are far more advanced and sees things the camera lens alters or eliminates all together.
4. Remember time passes. The sun will change the shadowing and colors of the setting every 15 minutes. There was a reason Monet went out to paint the haybales at the same time every day. And why he had several paintings of the same scene that he worked on each day. Every little bit he changed to the next painting he was working on until he finished each one, so....the lighting would be the same and the colors would be the same....each day he worked on the paintings.
5. Start by sketching in your composition. This is the point to work out all the kinks in your view. Personally, I like to do a mini value study or a thumb nail of my painting. If time allows, and this is for a commission or a very important piece, I will always do a watercolor color study of the scene. But again, keep it simple to start, blocking in and doing a color swatch on the side of your palette will often suffice as a base to do your piece. Over time though, doing a thumbnail, then a W/C color study is invaluable in making the painting successful. Working out your composition, lighting, and color temperatures.
6. Block in the large shapes to create your composition in a 2 D view.
7. Proceed to divide the large shapes into smaller shapes by adding more detail until you reach your desired finished piece. This is what transforms a 2 D into a 3 D painting. It is the nuances that create your vision of this scene by implementing temperature changes and light influence.
8. Remember.... most importantly....it is to have fun.....

When you do get to go out, don't forget....it is to have fun! We create to share our innermost visions of the world around us and I would never begin to stop anyone from creating their own masterpiece. But when you go out to paint on location, it has so many obstacles to the process that it can be daunting---bugs, trespassing, people watching you paint and asking questions to name a few of them. So now is not the time to fuss and labor over your final piece.

It is a time to release your inner creativity, to see only what an artist's eyes can see and then use paint and brush to bring it to life on canvas. This is only done when we are having joy, peace, and a release of our inner soul.  
So enjoy your days of painting!!! And remember.... have fun!!!

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