

Plein Air Painting

Holly McWilliams – Indigo Arts

Let's Paint Outside!

There's something magical about creating art in the great outdoors—feeling the sun on your face, hearing the rustle of leaves, and watching the light dance across the landscape. Plein air painting invites you to slow down and truly see the world around you. It also helps you grow as an artist by encouraging bold choices, intuitive mark making, and responding to the beauty of nature in real time.

Before we head out, be sure to pack a lunch, plenty of water, and anything else you'll need to feel comfortable for a full day outside.

This supply list has suggestion for all mediums – **oil, acrylic, watercolour and sketching**. Please pack the materials that are relevant to what you plan to work with on location.

Painting Supports

All Painters

- **Sketchbook:** A small, travel-friendly one for sketching, note-taking, or collecting memories.
Recommended sizes: 6"x8" to 9"x12"

Acrylic and Watercolour Painters

- **Watercolor Paper:** Pack a pad of 140lb cold-pressed watercolor paper. Choose sizes between 8"x10" and 11"x14" (whether you prefer watercolor blocks or individual sheets is up to you).
 - I like to bring two different watercolor pads when I travel. This way, I can work on multiple paintings if I feel inspired to do so.

Oil & Acrylic Painters

Keep things light!

- Bring **3-5 surfaces** in various sizes to paint on per day—more if you're a speedy painter, less if you're a slow-and-steady type.
- Use:
 - Canvas boards
 - Primed lightweight wood panels
 - Canvas pads
- **Recommended max size:** 11"x14" (any shape is fine—square, rectangle, panoramic)

Note for Oil Painters: Bring a **wet painting carrier** or box so you can safely transport your work home.

Paint Colours

If you have any colour in your paint palette that you cannot live without and it's not mentioned below, please pack it.

Oil & Acrylic

Bring your preferred brand. A warm & cool of each primary colour is a great foundation:

- **Yellows:**
 - Cadmium Yellow (warm)
 - Lemon Yellow (cool – Hansa or Azo)
 - Yellow Ochre
- **Blues:**
 - Phthalo or Cerulean Blue (cool)
 - Ultramarine Blue (warm)
- **Reds:**
 - Quinacridone Rose (cool)
 - Cadmium Red / Naphthol / Pyrrol Red (warm)
- **Neutrals & Extras:**
 - Burnt Sienna or Burnt Umber

- Titanium White
- Unbleached Titanium (also called Titan Buff or Warm White)
- Phthalo Green
- Quinacridone Violet

Watercolour & Gouache:

If you already have a portable set, bring it!

If not, here's a suggested palette:

- **Yellows:**
 - New Gamboge (warm)
 - Lemon Yellow (cool – Hansa or Azo)
 - Yellow Ochre
 - **Blues:**
 - Phthalo or Cerulean Blue (cool)
 - Ultramarine Blue (warm)
 - **Reds:**
 - Quinacridone Rose (cool)
 - Pyrrol Red (warm)
 - **Neutrals & Extras:**
 - Burnt Sienna or Burnt Umber
 - Payne's Grey
 - Phthalo Green
 - **Gouache (opaque)**
 - Titanium white
 - Unbleached titanium (also called buff titanium, warm white or titan buff)
 - *If you can't find these colours in gouache, pick them up in watercolour*
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Painting Mediums

Please bring whatever mediums you find essential for your process.

Here are a few suggestions:

Acrylic

Gloss medium or GAC 100 or painting retarder

Oil

Solvents to clean. I love Gamsol or Eco House .

Liquin, or walnut alkyd medium.

Palettes

Oil

- 12"x16" Disposable Palette paper or
- 12"x16" Glass palette with stay wet storage box

Acrylic

- An air tight palette with wells in to keep your paint wet on location
 - [Paint Storage Box](#)
- Stay wet palette 11"x14" or 12"x16" or Disposable palette paper

Watercolour

- A foldable plastic or metal paint palette is great for this. I like to get ones that aren't too big (max 9-10" in length). Here are a few links for suggestions:
 - [Foldable plastic watercolour palette](#)
 - [Foldable plastic palette](#)
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Brushes

Bring your favourite go-to brushes in small, medium, and large sizes and all your favorite shapes. My favorites are flats or filberts for oil and acrylic. For watercolour I like a variety of flat and round brushes.

Here are some suggestions with approximate sizes. Different brands will have different numbers for sizing so please use your judgment when shopping based on what's available in your art store:

Recommended Sizes Brushes (Oil & Acrylic):

- #2, #4, #6, #8, #10, #12 (flats, brights and or filberts)
- Smaller brushes for details

Watercolour:

- Flat: 1" (large), $\frac{3}{4}$ " (medium), $\frac{1}{2}$ " (small)
- *Round Brushes*: #10 (large), #7 (medium), #4 (small)

Oil & Acrylic: Synthetic or natural hair with some tension

Watercolour: Softer bristles – mix flats and rounds

Drawing Materials

I love to draw, sketch and play with different drawing materials while on location in my sketch book. Here are some suggested supplies for your sketching kit.

- Pencil Case
- 2H or HB pencil
- HB or 2B mechanical pencil
- White charcoal or pastel pencil
- Black pencil crayon or charcoal/pastel pencil
- Eraser
- Pencil sharpener
- Black fine-tip pens (NOT Sharpie)
 - Sizes: 0.1, 0.5, 0.8

Optional Fun Additions:

Colored pencils, pastel pencils, watercolour pencils, markers—bring what makes you happy!

Plein Air Painting Setup

Easels & Boxes

Oil & acrylic painters will need a lightweight **plein air easel** or **pochade box** for location painting. Here are some inexpensive examples.

- o [Aluminum Easel with carrying bag](#)
- o [Artis Easel Stand](#)

This is the pochade box I have, and I love it. You will need to purchase a tripod to mount this to.

- o [U.Go Plein Air Pochade Box](#)

Watercolour Painters

- No easel required! Paint seated using your pad/sketchbook or tape paper to a board. Unlike plein air painting with oil or acrylics, I prefer to watercolor and sketch while seated, usually with my materials on my lap. I don't use an easel for this; instead, I create directly in my sketchbook or watercolor pad, relying on the sturdiness of the booklet. If you're using individual sheets of watercolor paper, **be sure to pack a board to tape them to.**
- If you do pack an easel for watercolour, make sure it has a tilt option so you can paint flat.

Keep in mind that not every painting location will have a perfectly situated park bench or chair with an ideal view. To ensure you can paint comfortably wherever inspiration strikes, it's a good idea to bring a towel or outdoor blanket or even a dollar store plastic tablecloth you can sit on.

Other Essentials for Outdoor Painting

- **Grey View Catcher.** Also called an artist's view finder. This is an essential tool that outdoor painters use to help them with compositions
- [View Catcher](#)

- **Small spray bottle (Acrylic & Watercolour):** Like a travel size hair spray bottle. Any plastic or glass bottle that you can mist your paint with.
- **Water vessel (Acrylic and Watercolour).** Something small to put your painting water in - I like small Tupperware (the kind you put salad dressing in), a small glass jar or even the bottom of a plastic water bottle that has been cut off. I've even used a collapsable travel doggie water bowl and that works great.
- **Brush Washer (Oil):** A good metal leak proof brush washer is a very good item to invest in. Fill this with Gamsol or Eco House solvent.
- **Palette cups** for mediums
- **Palette knife**
- **Paper Towels:** Blue shop towel is the best.
- **Bag for garbage.** Embrace the plein air painter's motto of 'leave no trace.' Whatever you bring with you, take it back out. *Plastic grocery bags are great.*
- **Masking tape**
- **Apron**
- **Hat** with a brim ex: sunhat, baseball hat ect.
- **Plastic gloves** if you use them
- **Sunscreen**
- **Smartphone** (for reference photos!)
- Towel, picnic blanket, or plastic tablecloth to sit on outdoors
- **Butterfly clips, Bull Clips or some sort of clamp** to keep your painting surface on your easel on windy days.
- **Appropriate footwear.** Sturdy walking shoes
- **Tote Bag or Backpack** for all your art supplies

I cannot wait to help guide you through this magical experience. Remember, the more you do this the more you will discover the essentials that you need for your painting excursions. Use this list as a starting point—over time, you'll discover what truly becomes essential to your process.

Happy painting my friends!

Holly