

Outdoor Painting Class - Tips and Materials

Painting on location, regardless of the medium combines the separate challenges of both studio painting and camping.

The artist needs to have sufficient supplies to complete an on-the-spot sketch, but the materials must be of a size that can easily be transported to that spot. There are many different styles of sketch equipment. Regardless of the choice, the artist needs to be able to set up and break down quickly, work with minimum distraction, and leave the area as untouched as possible. That means the artist must pack out used paint rags and excess paint mediums. Also the artist's equipment must allow for the safe travel of the finished sketch, so it will not be ruined on the way back to the home studio.

Any sensible camper knows that you need to prepare for extremes in weather and insects. In addition, the outdoor sketch artist should wear neutral-colored clothing. Strong colored clothing is reflected onto the painting surface. A hat with a brim is a good idea. Baseball-style hats may be sufficient on the East Coast, but wider-brimmed cowboy-style hats are a must when painting in the West, particularly the Southwest; otherwise your ears and neck will become badly sunburned.

Specific paint colors are strictly an individual preference, but you can't go wrong with a warm and cool of each primary as a starting point. Student-grade colors are fine. They are far less expensive, but are not as concentrated. Those warm and cool primary colors are:

Cadmium Yellow Light	Cadmium Red Deep
Lemon Yellow	Cobalt Blue
Cadmium Red Light	Ultramarine Blue

There are also a few handy colors to have in your box:

Viridian Green
Cerulean Blue
Burnt Sienna

Also don't forget:

Titanium White	Palette knife
Turpentine and cup	Trash bag
Paint rags or paper towels	

Brushes:

Bristle Flats No. 4, 2, 1
Sable or Fitch (for detail) No. 2, 1

Paint surfaces are highly individual. Take into account that when painting outdoors, the direction and quality of the light (length of the shadows, etc.) is likely to change rapidly. For that reason it is recommended that unless you have considerable experience, you should choose to work on smaller picture sizes.

Many outdoor sketch artists prefer to work on gessoed board rather than canvas because the first thin lay-in of color can begin to absorb before you work on top of it. Also the tooth of the canvas, vital for extended under-painted studio projects, can really slow down sketch work.

Finally the sketch artist should pack a sketch pad, pencils and eraser. In general, most sketch paintings are preceded by several small (thumbnail) compositional studies in pencil. Many sketch artists also bring also a set of 'finders'. To make a finder, cut two L-shaped pieces of cardboard and mark them off in inches. Use paper clips to hold them together. View the subject through the finder and it will help you place boundary limits on your composition.