

## Learning to Paint Outside! Workshop with Keith Demanche

### Tips for painting En Plein Air

- **Bring only what you can carry comfortably.**

A backpack allows you to carry everything while keeping hands free. You should not bring so much that both hands are carrying goods – that is a recipe for injury if you should trip.

- **The least amount of stuff is important, even if you are walking only a short distance.**

It makes the set up/take down time faster, which means more painting time and less hassle.

- **Tell someone where you are going and when you will be returning.**

Or paint with one or more others. This will be more fun anyway.

- **Plan on no more than 3-4 hours.**

Too long of a time can often just be tiring and the light will have changed so much in that time you won't be making the same painting anymore. I often only paint for about an hour on one piece and start a second painting.

- **Get the best light.**

Painting first thing in the morning or late in the afternoon are best for getting exciting light... but be warned, the light changes VERY fast. The more toward noon, the slower the light changes.

- **Take a few minutes to find a view that inspires you, don't rush into painting.**

When arriving at a location to paint, let the area soak in for a few minutes. Once decided, try turning around and check out what is behind you – I don't know why, but often you'll be amazed at what you missed.

- **Always take a photo of the scene you are painting for reference.**

Especially when the scene inspires you. In some locations the sun might only light up an area for a few minutes, so having a photo will be invaluable. But also take photos of anything that catches your eye, you never know what will spark your interest will later.

- **Sketching a scene out ahead of time can be helpful.**

Once you are more comfortable with plein air, try getting to a location ahead of the time you want to catch a certain light (dawn, dusk, sunset, etc) lay out the painting structure and block in the areas so you are ready to paint the light as it comes into the perfect timing.

- **Easy parking.**

When finding a location for painting, if possible, find a place that is not too far of a walk to your view. Less than half a mile is best. A nearby restroom is always a plus.

- **Find a shady spot to paint from.**

This will make for a more comfortable time. But be aware the sun will shift while you paint.

- **Keep the surface of your painting out of direct sunlight.**

Try to keep your surface and the paints/palette in the same light. Colors will look very different in sun and shade. Another option is to have an umbrella shade your set up.

- **Wearing a hat with a brim is also a good idea** so you don't get glare in your eyes. But don't wear sunglasses!

Obviously, this will affect your color choices! If you have transition glasses, try to find an option for plein air.

- **Make your plein air painting more about how the location FEELS than technical accuracy.**

Paint freely and focus on what inspires you about the place you are in. Don't focus on making something perfect, capture the mood. This is why you are outside! To smell the air, to feel the wind, to hear the trees rustle. Don't focus on all the details. You can always tidy up a piece later, if desired. Often, plein air paintings can be a study for a larger/more in-depth studio painting.

- **Enjoy the outdoors!** Take advantage of being in nature and relax.

- **Be warned that you might get hooked!** After painting outside for a while, it becomes harder to paint in the studio.