

Material List for painting plein-air using pastels

General Guideline

Bring the smallest and lightest version of each item, because we will need to carry our own gear as we venture from one painting location to another. It would be good to fit everything in one bag or backpack, so that it is easier to transport.

Pastels

The assortment of pastels should be somewhat small so that they can be stored in a compact carrying case. Bring a good combination of soft and hard pastels. The brands include the hardest (such as NuPastels), medium (such as Rembrandt) and the softest (such as Unison, Schmincke, Sennelier). It's important to have a sufficient number of pastels, especially for the subtle colors and values. But, since we are painting plein-air, we cannot take too many either. We can learn to mix and layer colors on the paper when we paint. Following is a list for your reference. Each category can have 5 to 8 different values, hardness/softness and brands. By bringing one half or a third of each stick of pastel, you will be able to fit all these colors in a relatively small box.

- yellow / blue / reddish / grayish **greens**
- blue / reddish / grayish **violets**
- reddish / greenish **browns**
- reddish / yellowish **oranges**
- warm / cool **blues**
- warm / cool **yellows and beiges**
- warm / cool **grays and whites**

Pastel container

You can buy a box made especially for storing pastels, such as the backpacker size of Heilman box (from www.HeilmanDesigns.com). Or, you can make your own box with foam or felt lining to protect the pastels from breaking or moving around. I learned that it is best to carry the pastels box in your carry-on bag if you are flying, because sticks of pastels resemble ammunition when seen in the X-ray machine therefore the box might be opened to be inspected, and you'd want to make sure it is re-closed properly.

Tripod/folding table/Easel shelf – to set the pastel box on

Depending on your setup, one of these would work to set your pastel container on. For example: Heilman box can be fastened to a tripod, and a Sun-Eden easel may come with a shelf for the pastel box.

Corn meal – to keep the pastels clean

Bring it in an airtight container such as tupperware.

Paper

The following papers are recommended: Sennelier La Carte Pastel Card (for its variety of colors), Wallis Pastel Sanded Paper (for its fine tooth) and Ampersand Pastelboard (for its durability). Paper in mid-tone colors, such as sand or grey - providing a neutral value, is easier to start with. Bring smaller size paper, such as: 8x10 or 9x12, so that you could work quickly under the ever changing light.

Board(s) - to support the paper when set on the easel

The board should be lightweight and slightly bigger than the paper you will use, such as foam cord or masonite board. If you are using Ampersand Pastelboards, you will not need this since it has the board backing already.

Tape – to attach the paper to the board

Preferably use the acid-free tape since it is touching the surface of the paper the painting is on. Masking tape will do if it will not be right next to the boarder of your painting.

Easel

Bring an easel that's as lightweight and compact as possible. Working with a board held on your lap is OK but may not be comfortable. Sun-Eden has a couple of lightweight easels for pastel artists. If you have a Heilman pastel box with the easel attachment, you may not even need a separate easel.

Tracing paper (pad) – to protect the paintings from being scratched or smudged

If you bring multiple boards, you can tape a single sheet of tracing paper over the painting on each board. If you have only one board, you can remove the painting from the board and insert it into the tracing paper pad and secure it with some tapes. To make sure the painting is totally covered the tracing paper (pad) should be a little larger than the paper size, for example 11x14 tracing paper for 9x12 painting papers and 9x12 for 8x10.

Sunhat

Viewfinder

It can be an empty slide mount, a mat board with an opening, two L-shape boards clipped together to adjust the size, or purchasing a viewfinder, such as by Picture Perfect. It is a good idea to have the opening proportional to the size of paper you will use, so that what you see reflects what you will paint.

Camera

Optional – it can be used as a viewfinder too, and it is good to keep references for finishing the paintings later.

Small sketchbook and pencils

Optional

Disposable gloves – rubber or vinyl

Optional

Folding chair or stool

Optional

Umbrella

Optional - black, grey or white is the best. It's usually easy to find a shady spot if you find it too bulky to bring one.

Moist wipes - for cleanup

Optional

Sunblock and insect spray

Optional