

Painting in Paradise

**Travelling for Art Retreats
Why and How**



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No matter how satisfied you are with your regular painting life, the day comes when you need to see your work from a different perspective, to give it your undivided attention. For me, those kinds of changes come from travel to both structured artist retreats and self-directed residencies. The time to think, plan, refocus and work without the interruptions of ordinary life is the best gift I can give myself. Every time I've done so, I've come away renewed and lifted, with ideas I never expected to find.

I still have this desire - I plan always to have this desire! But now I also have the desire to share the experience with other artists. This is why I've developed Painting in Paradise, a series of artist retreats and workshops that provide the opportunity to develop new connections, to teach what I've spent over 35 years learning, and to help others see and deepen their skills in some of the world's best places.



The first time I travelled to an artists' retreat, I didn't go very far, at least not in miles. In its distance from the ordinary, and in my imagination, it was like going back in time to a life of peace and contemplation.



In a Benedictine abbey on the Saskatchewan prairie I, along with a group of writers and other artists, would join the monks for breakfast each morning. Then I would climb the stairs to a fourth floor classroom in the 1921 school building where the studio was housed. I felt time expand and all opportunity for growth and production stretch out in front of me. I went back every summer, and some winters, for years.



My next residency experience was on a different kind of prairie, at Ragdale, outside Chicago, Illinois. Ragdale was the summer home of the architect Howard Van Doren Shaw, who helped rebuild Chicago after the great fire of 1871, and it was established as an interdisciplinary artists' retreat in 1976.



Here I worked on what would be now for me unimaginably large paintings, walked in the prairie preserve on the grounds, and ate wonderful dinners in a group of fascinating people, some of whom remain friends even today. And I found a new subject, one that turned my artistic direction somewhere entirely unforeseen.



Suggested art supplies to take with you

I supply a materials list for each of my workshops but here are some suggestions

FOR PAINTING IN WATERCOLOUR

Paints

- Tubes in the primary colours: red, yellow, blue (recommended: cadmium red, cadmium yellow, ultramarine blue)
- Other useful colours: alizarin crimson, hookers green, burnt sienna, cerulean blue

Brushes

- Watercolour brushes, at least two, sizes: #10, 12, 14

Paper

- Watercolour pad/block at least 8x10"

Also:

- Plastic or ceramic palette
- Palette knife (plastic or metal)
- White plastic or ceramic plate for mixing paint
- 1 or 2 cotton rags, roll of paper towel, container for water
- Sketchbook; pencils and sharpener or charcoal; eraser

FOR PAINTING IN OILS OR ACRYLICS

Paints

- Tubes in the primary colours: red, yellow, blue (recommended: quinacridone red, cadmium yellow, ultramarine blue); titanium white.
- Also recommended: alizarin crimson, burnt sienna, phthalo blue. Added useful colours: cobalt blue, cadmium red deep, cadmium yellow deep

Brushes

- At least one flat and one round/pointy. These should be bristle brushes or synthetic brushes made specifically for the medium you're using. Don't buy them too small!

Painting surfaces

Both oil and acrylic paints can be used on stretched canvas, board, or prepared paper.

Also: Palette or mixing tray, palette knife, non-liquid brush cleaner for cleaning oil paint brushes. (I use the Master's Brush Cleaner and Preserver); non-turpentine-based oil painting medium for oil paints (not to be carried on airplanes), containers for liquids, rags/paper towels

OTHER USEFUL TOOLS

- Sketchbook; pencils and sharpener or charcoal; eraser
- Board to support your painting surfaces and/or easel if you want to use one
- Masking tape, scissors
- Vegetable oil for cleaning up oil paint



Twice I went to the Leighton Studios at the Banff Centre for the Arts in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, where I worked in a private architect-designed studio as winter elk roamed by the window. I was in the studio all hours and was astounded by my own production.



Tips For Travelling With Paint

- Be sure to put all your art supplies in checked luggage.
- The carriage of dangerous goods by air is governed by **International Air Transportation Association (IATA) Dangerous Goods Regulations**. These regulations are reviewed annually and revised by the Dangerous Goods Board as necessary.
- Check your airline's regulations before taking any art materials on board. Some airlines will adopt local rules beyond the scope of IATA that prohibit some product categories. It's also recommended that you print out this information and the relevant Material Safety Data Sheets for presentation to airline authorities and inclusion with any artists' materials in your checked baggage. Many airlines list their own specific requirements on their websites.
- Any product or material with a flash point below 61° Celsius is classified as dangerous goods and these products cannot be included in either checked or hand baggage during airline travel.
- Most oil colours that have a vegetable oil base (linseed, walnut, safflower), and most acrylic colours, have a flash point well above 61 C. Be sure to check. Watercolours are not flammable.
- All solvents and thinners are banned regardless of flashpoint.
- Gamblin Colors has suggestions on their website: <https://gamblincolors.com/tips-for-traveling-with-artists-materials/>
- Check the website for your paint brands to see if they have an IATA statement.

Also twice I travelled to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in Ireland, a place of comfort and peace left to the artists of Ireland and the world by the playwright. He made only two stipulations: that the Centre should be run by the governments of both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and that the residents should gather daily for dinner. It was at the Guthrie Centre that I discovered how to paint landscape. Not Irish landscape, but my own. In that generous atmosphere, something just fell into place. (Painting Irish landscape came later.)



What To Pack

I give packing advice for each of my workshops but here are some suggestions

- Pack light. Your art supplies will be heavier than you expect.
- Plan to dress in layers. Your art retreat experience can be made a success or a failure depending on whether you're warm or cool enough. Scarves can be very useful.
- Check the weather for the month and season you'll be in the retreat location for appropriate clothing.
- Unless you know of a specific reason you'll need dress-up outfits, don't bother with them. Artists' retreats are casual in dress.
- Wear comfortable walking shoes or sturdy closed sandals.
- Camera/phone camera + extra batteries + recharging cord or unit.
- Passport: Please ensure it is valid for at least 6 months beyond your scheduled return home.
- Airline tickets/itinerary/relevant phone numbers.
- Medical/travel insurance info/Copies of credit card numbers.
- Toiletries/personal items.
- Journal/notebook/pen/pencils
- Art Supplies: Always put your art supplies in your **checked baggage**.



I've also taken myself on self-directed residencies, often in Ireland, where usually in solitude and always with joy, I rented cottages, made peat fires, ate locally-caught fish, learned to love the sea, and found my path to new ways of seeing, new subjects for my painting, and new meaning for most things. That wild coastal climate, the landscape, the people - Ireland gets into your soul and changes you.



Every time I travel for my art, I come back filled with inspiration and new ideas. Sometimes the effects of a place are so profound I don't even know for awhile what they will be in the longer term. But every time, I'm enriched and enlivened. Something is altered for the better.

I created **Painting in Paradise** so that other artists might have this same experience, working toward the wonderful flow that happens when we step outside the ordinary, when we're able to glimpse a way of life that has what we most profoundly need.



See the opportunities that are available to you at www.laureenmarchand.com