

Plein Air Postcard



Introduction

Plein air, or painting “in the open air”, is about creating in the landscape. The practice goes back for centuries but was solidified into an art form by the French Impressionists. Their desire to paint light and its ephemeral qualities was supported by the evolution of portable art supplies making the practice more accessible. Creating in an environment also allows for an opportunity to engage multiple senses. It is a wonderful way to capture special places on your travels, and working in the postcard format allows you to share those places with the ones you love.

Mindful Reflection- 3-Minute Simple Attention Practice

The secret of beginning a life of deep awareness and sensitivity lies in our willingness to pay attention. Our growth as conscious human beings is marked not so much by grand gestures and major renunciations as by extending loving attention to the minutest pieces of our lives.

To develop greater mindful awareness and self-nurturance skills, once you have chosen your landscape and before you begin painting, allow yourself 3 minutes to be fully present, receiving the experience through the senses. Feel the sun or air on your skin, notice the quality of the light in the sky, and any smells or fragrances floating by. Allow your senses to come fully to life, drawing in all the sensory information around you. Let the effects of this practice support you as you continue with your plein air creation.

Materials

watercolor postcard or watercolor paper cut down to 4”x6” size
small piece of cardboard or mat board
painters’ tape
pencil
paint brush
watercolor set
small water container
paper towel
illustrator pen

Directions

When working with watercolors, there are several techniques that one can incorporate to create interesting effects. Here’s one to try;

- *Wet on wet*- The wet-on-wet approach showcases watercolor paint’s ability to create beautiful ethereal washes. To produce this technique, simply wet part of the paper with

your brush either with water or water a tiny bit of pigment. Then, dip your brush into another color and lightly dot it on the wet area and watch as the pigment spread.



1. Find a comfortable spot to work in a preferred landscape, and spend a couple minutes orienting yourself to the scene you'd like to capture. Tape your postcard down to a small piece of cardboard for stability, and spread your materials out in front of you so they are easily accessible. If you tape your work $\frac{1}{4}$ inch all the way around, it will create a clean edge on your finished piece.
2. Lightly sketch out your scene on a watercolor postcard.



3. Paint a simple background on your layout using the wet on wet technique described above. Allow to dry.
4. Add additional pigment in layers until your scene is complete. Allow to dry.
5. Use your illustrator pen to create additional detail, or until you achieve a composition of your liking.

