

1. **ABSORB THE SCENE** - Take plenty of time to explore and observe your location. Think about the things that attract you the most and label them. Is there a color, shape or quality of light that excites you? Make notes and small sketches of your observations.
2. **SIMPLIFY** – Of all tips, this may be the most important. You will observe many things and details about those things when you paint on location. The potential number of subjects and details can be overwhelming. Use the notes and sketches you have created in step 1 to help you simplify your scene. Use your sketchbook to design and map the four to seven largest shapes. Apply color & value to the shapes in a manner that creates a pleasing design.
3. **WORK SMALL** – Or at least smaller than normal. For most artists, outdoor painting is a means to an end. It is both an information gathering exercise and a way to develop skill with the medium. Working smaller means that you will be forced to concentrate on large shapes, rather than details.
4. **USE YOUR LARGE BRUSHES** – Using your largest brushes will force you to focus on larger shapes and will help strengthen your design “eye”. The large brushes also hold more water so you are more likely to get good, fluid washes.
5. **BE PREPARED FOR UNUSUAL DRY TIMES** – In plein air conditions, your washes will dry differently than studio. Usually they dry faster, but some conditions cause very slow drying. Pay attention to the dry rate with your first washes and try to adapt your process to the weather conditions. A wet, rainy or damp day may be the perfect time to try that wet in wet technique that you never seem to try in the studio. On bright, dry days, work with fluid washes and glazes in a direct manner.
6. **OBSERVE, EXPLORE, ENJOY** – Outdoor painting can be the most rewarding and enjoyable. Painting from life will develop your skills of observation like no other painting activity. Use plein air time to enhance your skills and broaden your range of technique. Some work created on location can often be enhanced in the studio to become very successful paintings.
7. **REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE IN THE ACT OF CREATING, NOT COPYING** – As a famous artist once said, “if you like the scene as it is, take a photo”. Otherwise you are free to create your own reality, which is what visual art is about.