

This guide is about reasons why people choose to go on a painting holiday. If you've been thinking about or planning a painting holiday you may find it useful.

WHY CHOOSE A PAINTING HOLIDAY?

Everybody is different and we all have our individual reasons for choosing to go on a painting holiday. Here are some of the reasons why I've chosen to go on painting holidays in the past - and I think a lot of people will identify with one or more of these.

In my experience, painting holidays have represented an opportunity for me to:

- get back to doing art again after a long break
- learn how to get better at some aspect of art
- take a big break from work - exercise the right brain rather than the left!
- take a 'time out' from the current work/life balance
- visit and paint in a particular location
- go on a painting holiday on my own
- go on a painting holiday on my own - but with like-minded people
- go on a painting holiday with friends I've made on previous painting holidays!
- have fun and relax

Salute from the Accademia Bridge
11.75 x 16.5", Watercolour and Coloured Pencil
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Below you'll find a few comments expanding on each of the above.

GET BACK TO ART

This was my primary reason for seeking my very first painting holiday.

I'd pursued studies in art through to an advanced level at school but had subsequently occupied myself over the next 15 years with lots of other non-art related studies for two degrees and two professional qualifications - half of which were done while also holding down a full time job! By the time I'd finished that lot I needed a big break - and of course, I wasn't needing my annual leave for studying and could actually go on holiday!

It seemed to me if I was ever going to get myself back into doing art again that I needed to immerse myself in art for a while - so I promptly booked myself a two week painting holiday in Provence. This turned out to be one of the best decisions I've ever made. I met a very helpful professional painter/tutor who gave me great advice about what to do when I got back home again - and everything took off from there.

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If you want to get back into art, it's maybe best to find a nurturing environment. However if you're somebody with art experience who's trying to get going again, you might also feel the need for a bit of a challenge - rather than spoon-feeding. I have to say I liked the fact that I was treated as somebody who was 'rusty' rather than somebody who didn't know anything. I think I might have ended up having the screaming ab-dabs if I'd had to do a complete beginners course.

LEARN HOW TO GET BETTER AT SOME ASPECT OF ART

This is a very common reason why a lot of people take a painting holiday. Sometimes however it's a good idea to go with a general aim of advancing your art.

I started with a very clear aim of getting back into doing art and a very vague 'learn how to paint in watercolour' as my objectives. I then found I was being taught by a tutor who only worked in oils, refused to teach watercolour - and interestingly I probably learned more on that holiday than any other!

While you will undoubtedly learn new things on a painting holiday, it should be noted that unless it is geared to teach a specific set of techniques to a set of people at a specific skill level then it's very likely that most painting holidays will tend towards the generalist and will be taught in a way which can accommodate all skill levels.

If you particularly want to learn something very specific you may find a short workshop dedicated to this to be more useful.

VISIT A PARTICULAR LOCATION TO PAINT

Baga Beach, Goa

(8.5" x 11.5" watercolour in Conte sketchbook)

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Location does make a difference - and some are more popular than others - Venice for example. I've been to a number of locations to paint - such as Bali, Goa and Prague - which I don't think I would have travelled to for the first time if had been on my own. The first time you visit a place, there's sometimes a lot of comfort to be derived from the fact that somebody else has been there before you and/or knows something about the place and where there are good places to paint plein air. It also tends to save time and effort and enables you to have more time for drawing and painting.



If travelling abroad I'd always advise trying to do a workshop with the tutor concerned before you go away as painting holidays in another country tend to be longer and cost more money than those in your own locality. It's good to know that you get on with and can relate to a particular tutor's approach before spending a lot of money on them and on getting to an overseas location! (This is, of course, where blogs can be very helpful to the process of getting to know a person and their approach to teaching).

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TAKE A BIG BREAK FROM WORK - EXERCISE THE RIGHT BRAIN RATHER THAN THE LEFT!

If you have a job which means you exercise your left brain an awful lot, then taking a holiday which reinvigorates and exercises your right brain can be a very refreshing break. I used to stop managing finances so I could go away and manage colour harmonies instead!

TAKE A 'TIME OUT' FROM THE CURRENT WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Some people use a painting holiday to take a big break or 'time out' from their current work/life balance at home. For many years I had jobs which were incredibly demanding of both my time and energy and the only way I could really focus on art for any length of time was to go on a painting holiday.

I worked very hard on the holidays too - but the complete break meant that I went back to my normal routine feeling completely refreshed.

It's also interesting to hear about people's backgrounds and jobs while on holiday - and I regularly used to meet people who were doing the same thing as me in terms of taking a 'time out'.

Lots of people taking painting holidays are those who are recently retired - trying out various potential hobbies or finding at time at last to pursue an existing hobby in more depth.

I've also lost count of the number of times I've met ladies who are contemplating divorce in the near future or have just got divorced! Painting for some reason seems to be associated with freedom to be who you are or who you want to be! :)

GO ON A PAINTING HOLIDAY ON MY OWN

Going on a painting holiday is something I wanted to do but it meant going on holiday on my own. I've always felt confident about driving on my own - but being away painting on my own took me out of my comfort zone - and painting with a group was an ideal solution.

Bottom line - I felt a lot safer the first time by going on a painting holiday as part of a group - even if I did negotiate a channel crossing, took the car on the railway and then drove right the way across France on my own on the way back!

I'd now go painting on my own quite happily - but it takes a bit of time and quite a lot of experience of painting away from home to develop the confidence to do this. Group painting holidays are one way of achieving this.

GO ON HOLIDAY ON MY OWN - BUT WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

This is a really excellent reason to go on a painting holiday and has been the main reason I continued to go on group painting holidays organised by other people after I got to the stage where I used to skip the demo and the tuition.

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You cannot underestimate the value you get from being on holiday with like-minded people. It's so nice to be able to talk art on a face to face basis. It provides the equivalent to working in a studio set-up with other artists - or being part of an art blogging community or art forum. In my opinion, it's even better because you get to be there and see what people choose to do and how people approach their work.

One of the big bonuses I also got from painting holidays was to mix with people from different age groups and backgrounds outside either a family or work context. For a long time I always used to be the youngest person on painting holidays. Those who have been on painting holidays may disagree with me but in my experience the age range usually tends to start at 40+ and any group often has a lot of people at or near retirement age. In addition, a lot of painting holidays have lots of women (including quite a few widows and divorcees) and very few men.

Having said that, I found out from painting holidays that very many older people can be a complete hoot and some are positively intrepid!

GO ON HOLIDAY WITH FRIENDS I'VE MADE ON PREVIOUS PAINTING HOLIDAYS!

This is the added bonus of going back to the same organisation for a painting holiday. I've been on a few holidays where I was on holiday with people I'd previously been on holiday with but who I didn't see at any other time because of where we lived. It's great fun - because you instantly eliminate the 'getting to know you' phase and jump straight to the 'what have you been doing since last we met'!

HAVE FUN AND RELAX

Naturally! I've always taken it as read that an underlying theme of any painting holiday would be that I would have fun and relax. If it's a holiday rather than a set of lessons or an instruction workshop, then you need to be able to relax as well as work at your painting - and the pace of any painting holiday which is longer than a couple of days needs to be designed to allow people to do this.

On the whole, if you want to learn a very specific technique you may be better off doing a two-day workshop which allows you to concentrate on this.

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