



THE ARTIST'S ESSENTIAL PACKING GUIDE





Ready to take your art beyond the studio?

Whether you're dreaming of painting sunsets by the lake, sketching people at your favorite café, or capturing memories on your next adventure, having the right supplies makes all the difference. But let's be honest – figuring out what to pack can feel overwhelming.

That's where this guide comes in! I've broken down the essentials for four different creative scenarios, from ultra-light hiking kits to fully-loaded outdoor setups. No more standing in the art store wondering if you really need that extra brush, or getting halfway to your destination and realizing you forgot something important.

Inside, you'll find practical supply lists and helpful tips for painting outdoors with minimal gear, setting up your complete plein air studio, sketching comfortably in coffee shops, and traveling smart with your art supplies. Each section is designed to help you feel prepared and confident, so you can focus on what matters most – creating.

Let's get you packed and ready to make art anywhere inspiration strikes!



The world can be your studio!

Every location offers its own opportunities.

Whether you're drawn to the changing light of a nearby park, the cozy atmosphere of your favorite café, or the incredible views along a trail: the key is simply choosing to go. Ask yourself: What inspires you today? Do you want to capture the energy of people and conversations, or do you crave the peaceful solitude of nature? Maybe you're feeling adventurous and want to explore somewhere completely new, or perhaps you're in the mood for the familiar comfort of a well-loved spot. There's no wrong answer – your artistic journey is uniquely yours, and every destination has something valuable to teach you about light, composition, and the art of seeing.

Remember: The best art supplies are the ones you actually use. Start with basics and add to your kit as you discover what works for your style. Don't let the fear of not having the "perfect" setup keep you from creating. A simple pencil and sketchbook have launched countless artistic adventures, and some of the most memorable paintings come from making do with what you have in the moment. Your skills will grow with every sketch, every color you mix, and every challenge you embrace. The most important thing you can pack is your curiosity and willingness to experiment – everything else is just tools to help you capture the magic you're already seeing.



Coffee Shop Sketches

 [watch starting a new sketchbook](#)

FOR RELAXED DRAWING IN COZY SPACES

Coffee shops make perfect sketching spots – good lighting, interesting people, and that relaxed atmosphere that makes it easy to settle in and draw. This compact kit fits easily in any bag and gives you everything you need for quick sketches or longer drawing sessions over your favorite drink.

Your Café Companion Kit:

- Sketchbook of choice, here are my favorites: [Strathmore](#), [Royal Talens](#), [Le Maxi](#), [Pith](#)
- [Mechanical pencils](#) or regular pencils: [12 set](#), [Blackwing set](#)
- [Fine-tip pens](#)
- Color pencils : [Polychromos](#), [Luminance](#), [Prismacolor](#)
- [Set of watercolors](#), [Kuretake](#) set,
- Watercolor Brushes: [Princeton Set](#), [My fav size 8 round](#), [Small water brush pen](#)
- [Blending stumps](#)
- [Kneaded eraser with case](#)
- [Artist's tape](#) for clean edges
- [Sälka Sling](#) to hold all of your supplies

coffee shop tips

Time to grab your art supplies and head to your favorite local café! Here are some tips to help you create comfortably while being a considerate customer:

- **Always buy something** – you're using their space, wifi, and atmosphere, so order a coffee, tea, or pastry to support the business. It's just good etiquette and keeps you in the café owner's good graces.
- **Choose your seat strategically** by looking for a spot with good natural light near a window, enough table space for your supplies, and a view of something interesting to draw. Corner tables or spots along the wall often work best.
- **Keep your setup compact** – stick to a small sketchbook, a few pencils or pens, and maybe watercolor pencils if you want color. Save the full paint palette for outdoor adventures! You don't want to monopolize a four-person table with your art studio.
- **Be mindful of your noise level** because nobody wants to hear you tapping your pencil or rustling through supplies during someone's important meeting. Keep movements gentle and supplies organized in a quiet bag or case.
- **Embrace the coffee shop vibe** – the ambient noise, interesting lighting, and people-watching opportunities are part of the charm! Don't fight the atmosphere, let it inspire your work.
- **Practice quick gesture sketches** since people move around frequently. Focus on capturing the essence of a person or moment rather than getting caught up in perfect details. Coffee shops are perfect for improving your speed and observation skills.
- **Respect people's privacy** – while the barista might be flattered by a portrait, other customers might not appreciate being your subject. When in doubt, ask permission or stick to drawing objects, architecture, or general scenes.
- **Pick quieter hours** when possible so you're not taking up prime real estate during the morning rush or lunch crowd. Mid-morning or mid-afternoon often offer the best combination of good light and available seating.
- **Bring a small water container** if you're using watercolors – repurpose a small jam jar or travel mug. Just remember to change the water regularly and clean up any spills immediately.

coffee shop tips



Sometimes the best art happens when you keep things simple. This lightweight kit gives you everything you need to paint outdoors without the bulk. Perfect for spontaneous trips to the park, beach walks, or hiking adventures where you want to travel light but still capture what catches your eye.

Your Curated Collection:

- Compact watercolor palette: [Winsor & Newton, Art Toolkit](#)
- Watercolor Brushes: [Princeton Set](#), [My fav size 8 round](#), [Small water brush pen](#)
- Watercolor paper pad: [variety paper pack](#), [Arches coldpress](#), [Arches hotpress](#)
- Portable water container: [nalgene 1oz](#), [2oz](#)
- [Swedish paper towels](#)
- Pencil for initial sketches: [Mechanical pencil](#), [12 set](#), [Blackwing set](#)
- [Kneaded eraser with case](#)
- [Lightweight folding chair](#)
- [Compact easel](#) or [drawing board](#)

En Plein Air Maximal Kit

☀️ [watch start painting outdoors](#)

FOR SERIOUS OUTDOOR PAINTING SESSIONS

When you have time to set up properly and want all your favorite tools at hand, this complete kit covers every technique and situation. Great for planned painting trips where you can take your time and really dive into a piece. You'll be ready for any lighting condition or artistic idea that strikes.

Your Complete Arsenal:

- Your choice of paints ([oils](#), [acrylics](#), [acrylic gouache](#) - my fav)
- Compact watercolor palette: [Winsor & Newton](#), [Art Toolkit](#)
- Variety of brushes: [Princeton Set](#), [My fav size 8 round](#), [Small water brush pen](#), [Velvetouch set](#) (great for gouache)
- Canvas panels or watercolor blocks: [variety paper pack](#), [Arches coldpress](#), [Arches hotpress](#)
- [Portable easel with storage](#), [tabletop easel](#), or [lightweight easel](#)
- [Swedish paper towels](#)
- Spray bottle for watercolors: [pocket size](#)
- [Kneaded eraser with case](#)
- [Comfortable portable chair](#)
- [Insect repellent](#) & [sunscreen](#)
- Snacks and thermos for sustained creativity

plein air tips

Time to set up your outdoor studio and paint nature in all its glory! Here's how to position yourself and your easel for the best plein air painting experience:

- **Find shade for yourself AND your canvas** because direct sunlight creates harsh shadows on your work and makes it nearly impossible to see your true colors. Look for natural shade under trees, building overhangs, or bring an umbrella to create your own shade. Your painting will thank you, and so will your eyes!
- **Position your easel so the sun is behind you or to your side** – this prevents your own shadow from falling across your canvas and gives you the best view of your work. If you're painting facing the sun, you'll be squinting and fighting glare all day long.
- **Secure your easel on uneven ground** by extending legs to different lengths and using the adjustable feet if your easel has them. Test the stability by giving it a gentle shake – nothing ruins a painting session like watching your easel take a tumble down a hillside!
- **Weight down your easel** with a sandbag, rocks, or your supply bag hung from the center post. Even a gentle breeze can turn your easel into a sail, and you don't want to chase your painting across a field. Some artists use a bungee cord to secure their canvas to the easel as extra insurance.
- **Set up your palette in shade** even if you can't get your whole setup shaded. Colors look completely different in direct sunlight versus shade, and you want to see what you're actually mixing. A palette with a lid or small umbrella clipped to your easel can create the shade you need.
- **Check the light direction on your subject** throughout the day and be prepared to adjust your easel position or finish quickly. That beautiful morning light casting perfect shadows? It's going to completely change in an hour, so work with the light you have, not the light you wish you had.
- **Keep your palette and supplies within easy reach** but organized. A small table, tray, or pochade box attachment keeps your brushes, mediums, and rags close at hand without cluttering your main workspace. You don't want to be stretching or searching for supplies while trying to capture a fleeting moment.
- **Position yourself comfortably** with good footing and room to step back and assess your work. Avoid steep slopes, loose gravel, or muddy areas where you might slip. Your focus should be on painting, not maintaining your balance!

plein air tips



Traveling Artist

 [watch my supplies on a plane](#)

FOR CREATING ART ON THE GO

Traveling with art supplies takes a bit of planning, but it's worth it to capture new places and experiences. This kit focuses on versatile, compact supplies that work well in different conditions and pack easily in luggage. You'll be ready to sketch everything from bustling markets to quiet landscapes.

Your Wanderlust Toolkit:

- [All-in-one travel art set](#) (watercolors, pencils, pens)
- Mixed media sketchbook (handles various mediums): [Strathmore](#), [Royal Talens](#)
- [Watercolor brush pens](#) (eliminates need for water)
- [Artist's tape](#) for clean edges
- [Small bags](#) for organization
- [Kneaded eraser with case](#)
- TSA-friendly water container: [nalgene 1oz](#), [2oz](#)
- [Digital camera](#) or phone for reference photos



Home Studio Setup

[watch how I thrift for my studio](#)

[watch my duel desk setup](#)

FOR YOUR CREATIVE SANCTUARY

Your home studio is where the magic happens most often – it's your creative headquarters where you can spread out, experiment, and really dive deep into projects. Having the right setup makes all the difference between a space that inspires you and one that feels chaotic. This list covers the essentials for creating a functional, organized workspace that makes you want to create.

Your Creative Command Center:

- Sturdy desk or table (adjustable height is ideal)
- Good task lighting (adjustable desk lamp or ring light)
- Comfortable chair: here's mine
- Desktop organizers for brushes and tools: stand or drawers
- Baskets or tins for paints and mediums
- Water containers (one for clean, one for dirty) - I like to thrift mason jars
- Palette options (ceramic, porcelain, disposable, or stay-wet)
- Tabletop easel or drawing board
- Storage cart on wheels for flexibility
- Plants, plants, plants! - I like using this plant food to keep my plants healthy



Meet Your New Creative Companion: The Sälka Sling

You know that feeling when you're perfectly set up to paint, and then you need to grab your water container... or reach for a different brush... or find that one specific color? Suddenly you're doing this awkward dance around your easel, trying not to knock anything over.

That's exactly why I created the Sälka Sling. It's like having a helpful assistant who holds all your essentials right where you need them, without getting in your way. Whether you're painting outdoors or sketching in a café, it keeps your most-used supplies within arm's reach so you can stay in that creative flow.

The best part? It works with any setup – clip it to your easel, hang it from your chair, or even wear it while you're scouting the perfect painting spot. No more digging through bags or setting things on the ground (where they inevitably get knocked over by a curious squirrel).

[Check it out at salkadesigns.com](https://salkadesigns.com)

The Rest of the Sälka Family



PIKA SLING



FIELD POUCH



SKETCHER



PENCIL POUCH

Pika Sling: Say hello to the Pika Sling! 🐾 This little cutie is perfect for those tiny but mighty essentials - erasers, sharpeners, small brushes, or whatever little treasures you need to keep sorted. Small but mighty, just like its namesake!

Field Pouch: Meet the Field Pouch - your new adventure companion! 🏕️ Perfect size for those medium essentials that need their own space. Whether you're hiking to your painting spot or just need organized storage that travels well, this pouch has got you covered!

Sketcher: The Sketcher has arrived! 🎨 Designed specifically for artists who need their sketchbooks, loose papers, and flat supplies perfectly organized and protected. Whether you're sketching on location or at home, this keeps everything exactly where it should be!

Pencil Pouch: Pencil Pouch perfection! 🖍️ Finally, a home for all those colored pencils, graphite sets, and fine liners that deserve better than rattling around loose in your bag. Keeps everything organized and protected - your pencils will thank you!



thank you



Thank you for your support!

I hope you found my **Art Supply List** helpful and that you are on your way to a consistent art practice! As a women-owned small business, I greatly appreciate your support. It means a lot that I could share this with you!

If you'd like to follow my creative journey for more inspiration, follow me on Instagram: [@jaclynbaerart](https://www.instagram.com/jaclynbaerart)

– Jaclyn Baer

Explore More from Jaclyn Baer Art



[FREEBIES](#)



[PATREON](#)



[SÄLKA](#)



[YOUTUBE](#)