

En Plein Air at Mono Lake

Beginning Oil Painting



July 14–16, 2023 • Penny Otwell

\$280 per person / \$265 for Mono Lake Committee members
enrollment limited to 12 participants

Painting outdoors allows a meaningful connection with the landscape and oil paint has delightful juicy properties and a covering quality that allows students to portray their own unique feelings in their work. This field seminar is designed to be an introduction to the sometimes-intimidating subject of oil painting outdoors. The class will be both fun and instructive.

Oil paint can be manipulated into forms, depth, and varying textures. Subtle desert colors or bold color and design can result in your own unique visual language. With demonstrations, individual instruction, group discussions, and plenty of humor, the group will discover the tools, techniques, and some of the challenges of the outdoor oil painter. Learn to transfer the feeling of where you are into what you want to say.

The group size is limited to offer individual attention. Students should have enough stamina to work outdoors in sun and wind most of the day. There will be some easy walking to painting locations. Essential gear is listed below.

Instructor Penny Otwell has painted in oil in the Sierra Nevada for more than 25 years. She will share her thoughts on choosing a painting location, the design of a painting, color mixing, different kinds of brushwork, and using a palette knife. She will help students choose a subject within the expansive 360-degree view of the Mono Basin's beauty. Penny's work has been influenced by the work of Chiura Obata, Maynard Dixon, Edgar Payne, and Wayne Thiebaud. She is best known for her Yosemite work; however, she particularly loves painting the Eastern Sierra. Her distinctive style has evolved as a self-taught painter. You can see her work at pennyotwell.com.

ITINERARY (*The itinerary may change due to weather or other conditions.*)

Friday, July 14, 3:30pm: Meet at the Lee Vining Community Center (296 Mattly Avenue). Bring your painting gear (see the supply lists below). After class introductions, Penny will demonstrate mixing color, brush selection and basic composition. The group will paint several exercises to learn basic brushwork, mix color, and learn to understand "value." We will break for dinner at 5:30pm and re-group at 7:00pm at the Community Center. Penny will present some samples of her work and inspire an introductory discussion about painting outdoors. We will talk about what you hope to learn in the class—bring some questions and ideas to this meeting!

Saturday, July 15, 9:00am: We will meet again at the Lee Vining Community Center, then carpool to Mono Lake County Park, five miles north of Lee Vining. Penny will do a landscape demonstration and focus on several basic composition and design concepts. Students will paint outdoors while Penny works with each individual until we break for lunch at noon. The group will reconvene at 3:30pm back at the Community Center to work later in the beautiful evening light. We will work until 6:30pm or even later, when the light is best over Mono Lake. Bring snacks or bag dinner if you want to work late.

Sunday, July 16, 9:00am: Meet at Mono Lake County Park once again. Penny can do another demo, but you are encouraged to get going with your own work. We will paint until 2:00pm, then do a final group discussion and wrap-up. The seminar will end at about 3:00pm so that students can start the drive home. Bring a bag lunch and plenty of water.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: EASY

This seminar's activity level: *easy*. We will be walking from cars to painting sites in the field, no more than half a mile from the cars. Participants will need to carry all their art supplies from the cars to field locations and back. Some of the painting locations may be in the sun, wear a hat and bring sunscreen please.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Temperatures in summer will be hot during the day and drop to chilly at night, with possible windy conditions and afternoon thunderstorms. Average temperatures in July in Lee Vining are 84°F (max) and 53°F (min).

This seminar will take place at elevations ranging from about 6,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level. It is a good idea to acclimate at the elevation of Lee Vining for at least 24 hours prior to the start of the seminar. Those with a history of heart, ear, or respiratory problems should consult their doctors before attending. Anyone restricted to lower elevations should not enroll.

Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at the higher altitudes of the Mono Basin. Begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is intense at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly using sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat. Restrooms available throughout the class.

MEALS

On Friday night we will break for dinner—students can either bring a bag dinner or visit one of the several restaurants in Lee Vining. You will want to bring a bag dinner to eat at the Lee Vining Community Center on Saturday night, and a lunch to eat in the field on Sunday. Make sure you have plenty of water and snacks each day.

OUTDOOR SUPPLIES

- notebook and pen/pencil for sketching and notes during class
- camera or phone camera
- appropriate layered clothing: warm layers, rain jacket, etc.
- hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, insect repellent
- snacks and drinking water
- chair if you want to sit while painting
- wear clothing and bring gear that you don't mind getting paint on**

ART SUPPLY LIST

- portable easel (French easel, half easel, pochade box, or something appropriate for outdoor use—borrow one if you can)
- a jar with a leak-proof lid (nothing fancy) for Gamsol or a “brush washer”
- an extra empty jar of same size (like a peanut butter jar with lid)
- an assortment of 4-6 bristle brushes: flats and/or filberts in sizes approx. #4, #6, #8
 - bring sizes of varying widths of 1/8", 1/4", and 1/2" (most important is to have variety!)
 - Note: Penny recommends Trekell Professional Art Supplies brand for good quality brushes at reasonable pricing: trekell.com
- hard panels or stretched canvas sized from 8x6" to 16x20" (about 6–8 total)
 - Think about how you will transport wet paintings in your car. Bring shallow boxes, newspapers to lay wet paintings on, or consider purchasing panel carriers (raymar.com).
- Arches Paper make an oil-painting paper—or you can gesso any watercolor paper for exercises and warm-ups.
- small palette knife for mixing and painting
- portable palette (12x16") with a lid to keep paint from drying out. Penny uses a Masterson brand box with lid, which is available at jerryartarama.com.

- 16-oz Gamsol odorless mineral spirits or Turpenoid for cleaning brushes (***absolutely no turpentine***)
- brush soap
- paper towels and small trash bags for each day
- small pocket mirror
- tool box, or something to carry paint tubes and brushes (Penny's is from Ace Hardware)

PAINT SUPPLY LIST

Paint tips:

- Good brands/sources are Gamblin or Utrecht, from suppliers like Dick Blick (dickblick.com) or Jerry's Artarama (jerrysartarama.com).

Recommended colors:

Penny suggests the "warm" and "cool" versions of red, yellow, blue (40ml ea.)

Cad Red Light – Alizarin Crimson

Ultramarine Blue – Cerulean Blue

Cad Yellow Light – Deep Yellow

Black or Burnt Umber

Large tube (150ml) Titanium White

Extra: Dioxazine Purple (or similar), Paynes Gray—Gamblin Brand is good paint!

Note from Penny:

These supplies will last a long time, which helps with the expense of starting to paint with oils. You need an easel for outdoor painting. You could borrow one. Bring a chair if you prefer to sit. We will park nearby painting sites so your car can hold some gear.

Bring a generosity of spirit towards yourself and the others in the class. We are all at different stages in our work. I am looking forward to painting together!

RESOURCES

- website: pennyotwell.com
- Facebook: Penny Otwell
- Instagram: psoart
- Questions? Email Penny at penny@pennyotwell.com



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

P.O. Box 29 • Lee Vining, CA 93541 • (760) 647-6595 • monolake.org/seminars