

Of course YOU CAN

If you've never been on a painting holiday, you don't know what you're missing

Taking the plunge and signing up for a painting holiday takes courage. It can be hard to throw yourself into something new when you have no idea what to expect, and are worried about whether you'll fit in or be good enough to paint alongside a group of strangers. But if you choose the right kind of holiday, it can be a great experience and enjoyable on a personal level, as well as beneficial for your art!

The great thing about a painting holiday is that everyone is there for the same reason – to improve their skills and spend time concentrating on an activity they love. Even if you're all different types of people, you'll be united by this common bond. Your fellow holidaymakers may well use different mediums and tackle subjects in a variety of ways, but painting alongside them on this type of holiday isn't about competing with them, it's about challenging yourself and getting as much out of the break as possible. While there will always be a tutor on hand to give you help and advice, you'll also benefit from swapping tips and techniques with fellow students, and studying their work. The other great thing about this sort of trip is that everything is organised for you: your travel is booked, your meals are cooked for you and often all the art equipment is provided too!

So, what are you waiting for? The wonderful world of painting holidays is out there ready for you to enjoy.

"I soon stopped worrying!"

Julia Reynolds entered a competition in the September 2013 issue of *Paint*, and was delighted – but also nervous – to find she'd won a four-day break in the Wye Valley worth £595 organised by Alpha Painting Holidays

"This was my first painting holiday, and although I was looking forward to concentrating on painting, I was apprehensive about the journey, the hotel, the group, the tutor - and would my painting ability fit in! But from the moment I got off the train at Lydney I was well looked after and my doubts began to disappear as I met the group and tutor, Noel Gregory.

The first day was at Symonds Yat East. I found the idea of painting outside daunting and it was becoming hot. I was given help setting up, with a chair, easel and water for painting and drinking. We were based in the hotel grounds with good views of the river Wye and, after Noel gave advice on choosing painting possibilities, everyone settled down



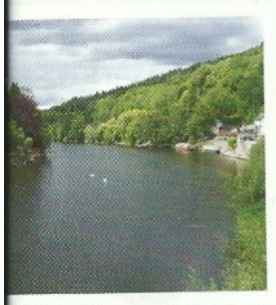
to work. I had decided to use acrylics as a change from watercolour and had some difficulty adapting, especially as the paint was drying too quickly with the heat.

At the end of the day I felt disappointed with my effort. Noel pointed out parts I could change or emphasize and after dinner I had another go. We had studio space at the hotel in a large, light room with big tables, which was a pleasant place to work.

Our next location was at St Briavel's.

There were plenty of painting opportunities to consider including a cottage, church and castle. I wanted a shady place, having chosen too sunny a spot the previous day and I wandered and made some sketches in the churchyard beyond the darker outer door then sat in shade to paint this view. At packing up time I felt better, having taken advice from Noel during the day and again I spent some time after dinner completing details and strengthening the dark and light contrasts.

Wednesday was the best day; we were at the Lindor Country Hotel, with superb grounds and lunch on the veranda. I felt the group really came together in these pleasant



surroundings, and at the end of the day we had each reflected the atmosphere of the lovely garden in our differing styles and media.

Before dinner on our last evening we laid out our work in the studio for review. I thought I'd be intimidated by this, but comments from Noel and the other group members were useful and I soon stopped worrying when I realised how much I could benefit from this sharing. After that we had another delicious meal, with lots of laughter in good company.

I enjoyed this holiday much more than I expected and it has given me the confidence to try another in the future. I liked the way everyone settled down and concentrated on a full day of painting, and I had good practical help from Noel and encouragement and tips from other members of the group. It was interesting to see how the variety of styles and media used were reflected in the painting of similar objects. Everything was organised for us and we were so well looked after that we could give all our attention to painting."

For an exciting list of tutors, including Joanne Boon Thomas, David Bellamy, Roy Lang to name a few, and breaks from three to seven days in the UK and abroad visit www.alphapaintingholidays.com or call Matt on 01934 733877.

