

Air Travel Tips for Artists

by **Keith Bond** on 9/24/2012 8:01:37 AM



*This article is by **Keith Bond**, Regular contributing writer for FineArtViews. [You should submit an article and share your views as a guest author by clicking here.](#)*

Since I have a flight tomorrow morning to Edmonton, Alberta (to teach a workshop), I thought I would share some airline traveling tips for artists. It may seem frightening to fly with artist's materials, but I have done it many times (even international), and have never had any problems.

A few years ago, I was able to bring all of my painting supplies onto the airplane as a carry-on. Those days are gone. But with some common sense and a little pre-planning, traveling with paint supplies isn't a big hassle at all. Here are some things to keep in mind.

You must put your paints in checked luggage (unless you have dry watercolor cakes). Well, okay, you *might* actually get away with bringing liquid paints in your carry-on **if** the tube sizes are small enough to be within the allowable ounces (or milliliters). But, I don't want to risk having my expensive paint confiscated, so I always put them in checked luggage. Besides, I often bring larger tubes, anyway. I've never had any paint confiscated, yet.

You must put all palette knives and other tools that may look suspicious in your checked luggage.

Mediums are a maybe. Check the manufacturer's website for the Materials Safety Data Sheet or MSDS to determine the **flashpoint** (the temperature at which the paint will combust). Most all art supply manufacturers have this info on their website. If the flashpoint is higher than 140°F, you can bring it on an airplane.

Do not bring any solvent of any kind. Either plan to purchase it once you arrive at your destination or ship it ahead of time. This is the most difficult item if traveling to a third world country. I had to buy cheap quality (and very strong smelling) solvent in Guatemala. However, I recently learned that Gamsol has a

flashpoint of 146°F, so you can bring it if you make sure to bring the MSDS to prove that it is allowable. I have yet to try this.

Bring all paints and mediums in their original containers.

Bring a printed copy of the MSDS for your supplies in case you need to prove the flashpoint. Keep it with your supplies.

I also include a brief typed paper explaining the following points (it is best to use simple bullet points like this example or else they might not read it):

- These are Artists' Colors (never use the word "paint")
- They are made with vegetable oil (unless they are acrylic or watercolor in which case indicate that they are water based artists' colors)
- They are not hazardous for travel
- They contain no solvent
- Indicate the flashpoint
- Refer them to the MSDS for more complete, detailed information

Be prepared to have your bags opened and inspected. Your art supplies will almost always get a closer inspection.

Doing these simple things will make it much more likely that your travels will be hassle free (at least when it comes to the art supplies).

So go ahead, make those travel plans. Take your paints and enjoy capturing your trip in paint.