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Crystal Cove Nurtures Plein Air Artists

With its beautiful scenery and painting classes, Crystal Cove beckons both experienced and novice artists.

By [Kathy Ochiai](#) | [Email the author](#) | August 6, 2011 | [Print](#)

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Dick Hoole looked out across the sand and the ocean at [Crystal Cove State Park](#) and dabbed a bit of oil paint on his canvas. He, along with about a dozen other artists, were creating paintings of the beautiful beach scenery.

"I'd like to become a painter," said Hoole. "I see all these nice paintings around and I think, 'I can do that.' So I thought, 'Well, why not take a class?' And what better place to take a class?"

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Hoole signed up for The [Crystal Cove Alliance's Great Plein Air Art Experience](#) class. During the class, novice artists are taught by a professional artist how to paint *en plein air*, or "in the open air." The five-hour class is \$75 for non-members and \$60 for members of the C.C.A. All materials are provided, plus students receive a T-shirt. There is also a class for intermediate artists.

Debbie Morines and her friend Bif Ingham took the class.

"We work together," said Morines. "I said, 'C'mon, let's go paint!' You can't beat the setting and [Alan \[Nowell\]](#) the teacher is really good. It's so fun, it's like a vacation."

"I've never painted before," Ingham continued. "I mean, I teach kindergarten and I don't even demo art to my kids. But I try to follow the old adage, 'Do something every day that scares you.' This is nice here because anything's accepted."

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This is the second class that Dulce Pena has attended. She loved the first class so much, she thought she would try it again.

"It isn't about getting it 'right' for me," said Pena. "It's about putting something on the canvas. It's a lot of fun, because I love being outdoors and at the beach. Painting forces you to focus on something other than whatever's going on. You're looking at textures and colors, doing beautiful things. That's where your mind goes."

Kathy Jacobson is a retired nurse. She visited Crystal Cove and became a volunteer for the C.C.A. Now she's a part-time sales associate and artist.

"I love the community feel here," said Jacobson. "It's like a small town. Everybody's friendly, there are no cars and it's relaxing. It's a very nurturing place for me to do art. I sell my ceramics in [the gallery](#) and I help with the art classes."

Sharon Cebrun was lucky enough to share the painting experience with her two daughters, Joelle Buchan and Jaimie Lewis.

"This is such a great deal, and Alan is a great teacher," said Cebrun. "He gives you a real basic introduction about how to mix the colors and shows you how to blend and visualize them. He tells you how to put what you're looking at on a canvas."

The raved-about instructor, Alan Nowell, is a professional painter and a member of the [Southern California Plein Air Painters Association](#).

"My favorite part about teaching the class," said Nowell, "is the stuff I learn. I had no idea that would happen. These students inevitably suggest something that hadn't occurred to me."

Two other experienced artists visiting Crystal Cove this day were Mid Valley Arts League painters who had come from Arcadia.

Mary Jane Klune and her fellow M.V.A.L. artists paint every Thursday all over the Southland and sometimes in other countries. Twenty years ago, she lost her job and was temporarily unemployed. She started taking art classes, went back to work, then retired and began painting because she had more time.

"I like the color here," said Klune. "I like to paint nature and the ocean, which I adore."

Another M.V.A.L. artist, **Nancy Shiershke**, was painting on the porch of an old Crystal Cove cottage.

"I've always been an artist ... even as a little kid," said Shiershke. "I was painting on the side my house with jade plant. I wasn't even five years old when I was drawing and sketching. Look at all these people ... the umbrellas, the color, it's really something."

Kathy Jacobson sells her ceramics at the Crystal Cove Gallery. Alan Nowell's work is there also, as well as the [Studio 7 gallery](#) in Laguna Beach.

[Click here to register for Crystal Cove Plein Air classes.](#)