

Nature Sketching & Journaling with Irene Brady

WHAT TO EXPECT: Once you've gotten yourself to San Jose International Airport (SJO), a short flight will take you to Puerto Jimenez where you will be met by a shuttle and taken directly to El Remanso Wildlife Lodge.

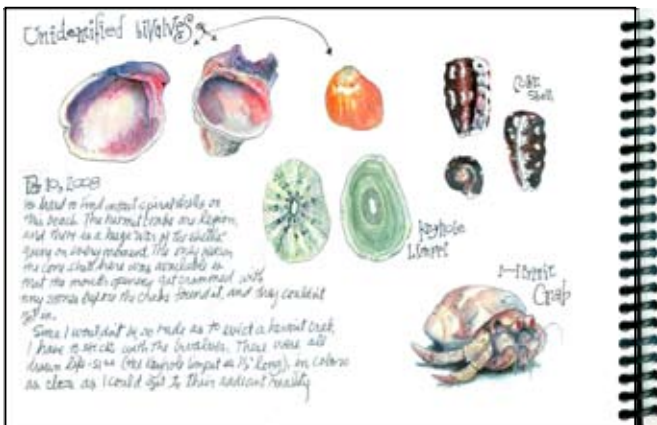
On the Osa Peninsula, the sun rises around 6 am and sets at 5:40 pm. The amazing pre-dawn rolling roar of the howler monkeys should awaken you just in time for breakfast, which begins serving at six.

DAY 1: Our classes will begin at 9 am each day. All supplies except your personal journal will be provided, including a lavishly illustrated workbook filled with journaling tips, which you'll use during classes and take home at the end of the workshop. Bring your own watercolor pencil set if you'll want to add color to your drawings while out in the jungle or down on the beach. A 12-color set will work nicely.



This will be your workbook for the class

In our very first session, you'll begin to create your illustrated, fun-to-read nature/vacation journal. Each participant will begin and proceed forward from his/her initial personal skill level, so beginners needn't feel shy. While you may learn from other journalers' experiences in the workshop, this is not a competition.



One of my journal pages from a recent workshop at El Remanso

As a first step, you'll share your vision of the ideal journal, then we'll discuss ways to reach those goals. Our efforts in this workshop will center on creative writing and sketching which are within the reach of every journaler. Your workbook features ideas on ways to write and draw to make your journal a book you'll return to again and again for inspiration, reflection, memories and enjoyment.

After some warm-up right-brain exercises, you'll begin drawing exotic items from the jungle. By 11:30 even beginners will be able to forge ahead on their own, and you can take off with your journal to practice what you've just learned – out in the jungle, in your room ~ wherever you like.

There will be plenty of time for solo sketching and journaling of whatever intrigues you in the jungle or down on the beach. In fact, sketching opportunities may be just outside your room: watch for coatis, monkeys and agoutis foraging on the forest floor or in the trees overhead, and take advantage of encounters you may have with exotic birds, insects, iguanas, crabs, seashells and botanical specimens both on the forest trails and down on the beach. Bring your binoculars ~ they're a real asset for close-up observation.

Lunch is served daily at noon. Class resumes at 1 pm and goes until 3:30. You'll be fine-tuning what you have already learned and experimented with during the morning and on your solo outing.

By the end of today, even inexperienced artists will be drawing sufficiently well to add considerable interest to a journal page. A gentle critique will offer ideas for improving techniques and skills.

Sketch, relax or take a nap until dinner, served from 6 to 8 pm, preceded by drinks and happy hour. People usually go to bed fairly early (before ten) because the short daylight hours mandate an early rise.

DAY 2: At 9 am, you'll begin "Creative Writing in your Journal." For instance, you might sketch a natural item in your journal, then turn a short, terse sentence about it into an interesting narrative of observation and description (interwoven, if you wish, with your vacation experience).



Classes meet on the open-air deck ~ great atmosphere!

Chestnut-mandibled Toucan



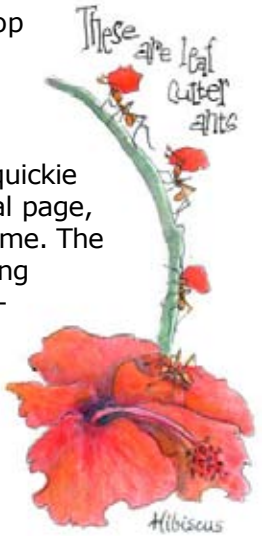
This toucan and the ants at right are sketches from my journal.

Then, after a quick review of the rules for haiku (short, punchy Japanese nature-tone-poems) you'll try your hand at writing a haiku featuring the subject you've just been sketching and journaling about.

This is a favorite activity for many workshop attendees, because haiku goes so perfectly with the sketches in your journal, and adds class to a journal page.

After sharing our haikus, we'll try creating quickie four-liner poems, which can also pep up a journal page, as well as freeform poems that don't rhyme. The surrounding jungle canopy, rollicking monkeys and macaws make perfect subjects for these efforts.

At 11:30, we'll break for the morning. Use this open time to work on your poems or sketching, and to seek out a flat item to decorate your journal (a leaf, feather, flower, a postcard or photo, etc.).



We'll meet again at 1 pm to examine various items that can be glued or taped onto a journal page to add interest. Then you'll learn how to brighten your journal with decorative script, to see how a beautiful initial cap can dress up your page. Try your hand at a special "Fun Vacation Font" I'll be teaching, or carefully hand-letter the morning's best haiku into your journal.

Day 3: We'll meet at 9 am to absorb "Watercolor Pencil Techniques," learning how to apply color effectively to your journal sketches using a huge rainbow assortment of watercolor pencils. You'll learn how to dry-blend the colors, then apply water for a watercolor effect, finishing for the day at 11:30.

The rest of Day 3 is open for fun, but you do have an assignment: try one or more new approaches to create an attractive journal page before tomorrow's class. You may want to experience some of the other inviting activities at El Remanso: hiking, walking on the beach, tree-climbing into the jungle canopy, zip-lining from tree to tree, rappelling down waterfalls, horseback riding, surfing, or kayaking. All of these things can provide fodder for a memorable journal entry, so take along your journal and camera!



A workshop student sketches a jungle landscape.

Day 4: The final class begins at 9 with a short critique of yesterday's efforts. Then we'll tuck journals, sketching tools, cameras, binoculars, swimsuits, towels, bag lunches and sunscreen into our fanny packs and hit the trail to the beach to sketch beach scenes, coconut trees, sea shells and other goodies. There's a wonderful waterfall to visit and tidepools to bask in – and a shady forest edge for the intrepid journaler to ply newly-learned skills. Pelicans, macaws, squirrels and monkeys, frigate birds, coatis, whales, hermit crabs and myriad other wonders may be encountered, observed, sketched and journaled there, too.

We'll be back by 2 for a final critique of the journaling from this outing. We'll take photos of the group and your handiwork which can be emailed to each of you after we return home. Exchange addresses with your classmates ~ your new friends.



Here I'm sketching one of the vivid land crabs

For more information, please visit my workshop blog, <http://naturejournaling.blogspot.com>. Classes are small ~ only twelve participants ~ so if you plan to attend you should make arrangements as soon as possible. See you in Costa Rica!

Karen Brady



I hope you can join us!