

# Orlando Sentinel

## Wekiva Paint Out returns with plein air painting, new virtual exhibition

Wekiva Island will soon be filled with painters and easels spread throughout the Longwood outdoor venue as the Wekiva Paint Out returns for its 15th annual event.

The celebration of plein air painting, Feb. 22-27, will mostly resemble events of years past with a focus on art and fundraising, but some pandemic-inspired modifications will be in place.

“So many artists are like, ‘I hope you’re having it,’” said Mary Sue Weinaug, executive director of Keep Seminole



Beautiful and co-owner of Wekiva Island. “We’re taking temperatures, you have to wear your mask. Our gala will be spread further apart.”

Other typical paint out events, such as the art auction, will still take place in 2021 but come with new adjustments for safety and social distancing.

While the public is still welcome to come and witness outdoor art as it happens, this year’s event includes an online exhibition for those who don’t feel comfortable attending in person.

“We figured we’d put all the art up online and make it available for sale so that people will be able to view it online and purchase it,” Weinaug said.

Some of the proceeds from art sales will benefit the Wekiva Wilderness Trust, which aims to build a Serenity Garden accessible for people with disabilities and Keep Seminole Beautiful, which facilitates cleanup of roads, rivers and parks.



Though masks will be part of the picture this year, visitors can find the usual sights of artists and easels as the painters interpret scenes of egrets and shimmering waterways.

Central Florida painter Peter Pettegrew, one of the Wekiva Paint Out's 22 artists, said he looks forward to getting some fresh air outside of his studio.

"It is pretty quiet [in the studio], you start talking to the walls," he said. "With an event like this one coming up at Wekiva, I'm looking forward to just being able to get out of the house and see some other people and meet with them a little bit."

A veteran of paint outs past, Pettegrew knows this year will look somewhat different. Typically, artists would gather together to catch up and share stories while camping in cabins at Wekiwa Springs State Park. While that camaraderie will still be a part of the event, artists will be spread out in different cabins and play it safe as the pandemic continues.



"It's not going to be real cozy ... The painting part is very safe because we're out in canoes and hiking in the woods and stuff," Pettegrew said. "As far as the painting part goes, there's really nothing to worry about."

One welcome change for Pettegrew is that he won't be pulled away for side jobs during the paint out. This time, the painter will embark on the weeklong stay typical of other artists. "I'm taking all my stuff,

leaving on Sunday afternoon and I'm not coming back the whole week," he said. "This will be the first year, in a long time, that I've stayed up there ... It really will be a retreat."

**If you go**

The 15th Annual Wekiva Paint Out is Feb. 22-27 at 1014 Miami Springs Drive in Longwood. The public is welcome to view artists painting daily. Special ticketed events include a live auction Feb. 24, a craft beer tasting Feb. 26 and a gala dinner Feb. 27. Masks and temperature checks are required for visitors. For more information and an online art exhibition, visit [wekivapaintout.com](http://wekivapaintout.com).

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