

# Inaugural Venture Out Plein Air Event Brings Artists to Gulf State Park on Alabama's Coast

*An exciting four-day plein air (outdoor painting) event featured talented artists capturing the beauty of Gulf Coast landscapes and wildlife.*

ORANGE BEACH, AL, UNITED STATES, June 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The four-day [Venture Out Plein Air](#) Painting event and one-day exhibition was held at Gulf State Park May 14-17, 2026. It was part of the inaugural "Venture Out – A Celebration of the Back Country Trail" and artists were encouraged to capture the beauty and variety of the landscapes, water views and wildlife along the trail and in the park. Fifteen invited artists from throughout the Gulf Coast area participated, painting live at various locations throughout the weekend. The [Friends of the Arts](#) - Orange Beach was the signature sponsor of the plein air event.



Artist Susan Knowlton paints at the edge of Lake Shelby

“

What a beautiful place. How could you not be excited about being here? This is fabulous and I'm happy to participate. This is a wonderful thing these folks are doing.”

*Fran Gentile, Fairhope AL  
artist*

Fran Gentile of Fairhope, Alabama, captured marshes, lakes and beach scenes during the event, which was her first time painting in the park. Both a plein air and studio artist, she was taken by the nuances and color changes the park's environment offered.

“What a beautiful place,” she said. “How could you not be excited about being here. This is fabulous and I'm happy to participate. This is a wonderful thing these folks are doing.”

Susan Knowlton traveled from Gulf Breeze, Florida to participate and was happy to find a new location that she loved.

“I really have not spent time in this park,” she noted, adding that she was spending the weekend

in one of the park's lakeside cabins. "The park has a limitless number of places to paint. I think this could become a really grand event."

On Sunday, May 17th, the Venture Out Plein Air Art Exhibition was held at The Lodge at Gulf State Park where more than 65 paintings were on display. According to event director Kristin Pierre, an artist who lives in Gulf Shores, the participants loved the inaugural event and were already asking whether it would become an annual occurrence.

"We were thrilled to be able to introduce artists to the beauty and diversity of the park and its trails and also to showcase these amazing artists and their work," Pierre said. "We could not be more pleased with how things went and are very grateful to our signature sponsor for the plein air event, the Friends of the Arts of Orange Beach. We were also happy to be a part of the bigger Venture Out event, which brought folks out who might not otherwise have seen the artists at work and their beautiful pieces."



Kristin Pierre, Director of the Venture Out Plein Air event



Kris Garard showcases her plein air art

The four-day festival featured a variety of outdoor-focused activities, workshops, and tours throughout the 6,100-acre Gulf State Park and along the extensive Backcountry Trail. The family-friendly event was a collaboration between Gulf State Park, the City of Orange Beach, the Learning Campus at Gulf State Park, the Gulf Coast Eco-Center, and a host of other businesses and exhibitors. It was a signature event among several for the celebration of the [Hugh S. Branyon Back Country Trail](#) which was voted "Best Recreational Trail" by USA Today's 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards for two years in a row. The trail runs through both Orange Beach and Gulf Shores. Pierre said "We are in talks now to select a May date for 2027 and look forward to inviting even more artists who will showcase the breathtaking scenery of our trails and the Alabama Gulf Coast."

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