

Tipi Supply – Instructions for painting your own Tipi

Use Exterior Latex paint.

Dilute with 1/3rd water to 2/3^{ds} paint. The water won't change the color. Two to four coats will flex with the canvas and not crack. Latex paint is naturally breathable and expands and contracts with the canvas.

Buy an extra empty metal paint can and lid for this mix of each color. Write the paint brand, color, and color mix number on these cans & lids. Also your water to paint mix. If it is 1/3rd water to 2/3^{ds} paint, write it on the can with a magic marker.

Test your colors on a scrap piece of canvas. You can buy canvas at a fabric store to experiment on. Painted colors on canvas will look different than the paint sample the store gives you. Allow the paint to dry completely because wet paint on canvas may be a lighter or darker color after drying. Red colors fade more quickly than other colors, so I recommend choosing strong deep Red colors. All Reds fade towards Pink over time in the sun. You may want to plan on repainting Reds after a few years in the sun. Very bright Reds should only be used in small amounts, such as highlights, not large stripes over 2 feet wide. Yellows are another color to be careful with. Dark Yellows don't work when used as large stripes over 2 feet wide. Experiment with a bright, or light Yellow. Test your Blues and Greens also. Browns are more forgiving. When painting a light color design over a dark color, do not dilute the paint, in fact you may need to use two coats to cover the dark color.

Don't use cheap paint. You want as much pigment in your paint as possible.

After spreading out your tipi cover on a clean wooden floor, loosely stretch it out by placing a nail in each staking loop around the bottom, and the holes up the front for the lacing pins, and the loop at the top that ties to the lifting pole. You can also paint on a concrete floor or blacktop driveway. Instead of nails, just set a weighted object on the loops to hold the cover in place. You don't want it moving around on you. Now it is ready to be painted.

To find the radius point for any borders of stripes at the lower 1/3rd of the cover, triangulate a measurement between the middle of the cover bottom point "A", -See Attachment "Radius Points"-, and each door side at the bottom points "B". Mark that point and drive a nail there, it will be point "C". Attach a length of cord or rope with no stretch in it to that nail. Tie a loop around a pencil at the point you want to make a border for a stripe and lightly mark the cover at the edge of the stripe with the pencil. Your pencil marks will show if they are too dark, especially with light colors. You can also use a small artists brush instead of a pencil and just make a dot every foot along the border, with the color that you are going paint.

For marking the borders for stripes at the top, move the radius point one foot closer to the canvas, from point "D". This will make the design parallel to the ground. If you don't adjust this upper radius point the design at the top will look tilted when viewed from each side of the tipi.

You always have to maintain a wet edge when painting latex on water proof canvas. If the paint dries for only about 15 minutes, when you start painting again the overlap will be noticeably darker. Have enough paint mixed to complete a wide stripe at the bottom or top. Don't allow any interruptions.

Any areas that are painted are going to make the tipi cover last longer. If you decide to paint the whole tipi, you can use a roller. This is the only time I will tell you to use one. - You can also paint the middle section with a canvas color for a background before you paint the designs in the middle. The paint store can scan a piece of canvas to create a canvas paint color. Thin the paint with water, 50/50, or 2/3^{ds} water, 1/3rd paint, so the light will still come thru. I also recommend painting both sides of your liner. The bottom of a liner is especially prone to mildew. - When painting the whole Tipi, mix your paint in a 5 gallon bucket first. For Tipi covers larger than 20ft. use a 10 gallon or 2 - 5 gallon buckets.

You will need soft rubber knee pads, a paint tray; paint pads that mount on a handle. Medium size and trim size. Have extra pads for different colors. The medium paint pads work best for large areas. They don't sling paint like a large paint brush. The pads also allow you to carry more paint and apply a little pressure, which is necessary with waterproof canvas to break the surface tension. The trim size pads work well for the edge of a large stripe, and then use the medium pad for the rest of the stripe. They can be washed out and used over & over. Artist brushes of all sizes can be used. They work best on an already painted surface. Natural sponges can be used also. I always set my paint tray inside a low sided plastic tray, and then set that on a 3 foot x 4 foot piece of canvas. This helps eliminate disasters such as drips outside the lines. If you try to spray paint on waterproof canvas the paint will just bead, You have to brake that surface tension with a little pressure. - 

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