

DARKROOM : PHOTO EDITING

TUTORIAL INFO

| WRITER | SOFTWARE | ALTERNATIVES | TIME REQUIRED | DIFFICULTY |
|------------------|-------------------|---|---------------------|--------------|
| Richard Cosgrove | Adobe Photoshop 7 | Jasc Paint Shop Pro 8 or Adobe Photoshop Elements 2 | 30 mins to one hour | Intermediate |

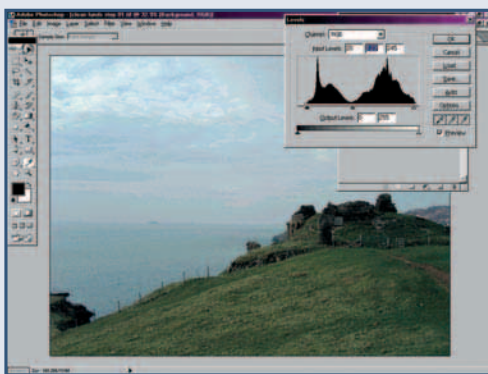


Improving Landscapes

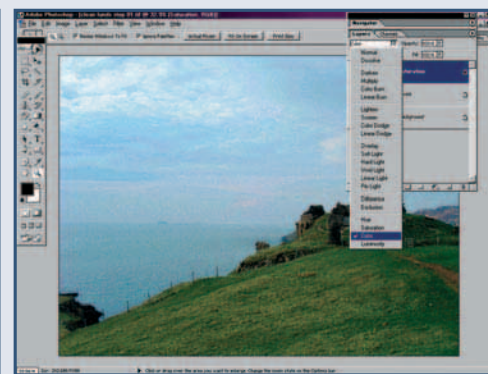
Sometimes even the most beautiful scenic shot needs a little help. See how a dull day was turned into a bright Summery scene



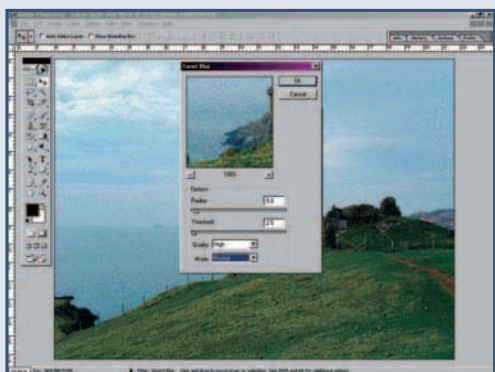
1 Although most digital compact cameras are good for general snapping, many of the low and mid-range cameras have difficulties when taking landscapes. The digital camera used to photograph this vista has recorded a dull scene – even though the day was quite bright. All of these problems can be compensated for using basic image editing techniques. The first job is to identify the problems areas of the image. Here they include a narrow contrast range, poor colour saturation, poor detail in the castle and a rather high amount of grain.



2 The first step is to expand the contrast range to brighten the image. Press Ctrl-J to duplicate the image's Background Layer (name this layer Levels). Make sure the new layer is being edited and then open Levels control (Ctrl-L). The histogram in the Levels dialogue box is a representation of the distribution of the photo's bright and dark pixels. In an image with a good contrast range, there should be no flat areas on either side of the histogram's peaks. Here the histogram starts and stops just short of the edges of the graph, indicating a narrow contrast range. To correct this move the black and light grey sliders in until they are under the beginning and end of the graph. Now move the central slider slightly to the left to brighten the darker areas.



3 The foreground will be much brighter, and there will be more detail visible in the castle. However, what little colour there was in the sky will have been drained away and the grass will appear less than green. Now duplicate the Levels layer (Ctrl-J) and open the Hue/Saturation control (Ctrl-U). This dialogue box allows the colours in the image to be altered using the Hue/Lightness/Saturation model. Hue is the base colour being used, Lightness is how bright it is and the amount of Saturation defines how strong the shade is. To increase the impact of this image's colours increase the Saturation to +50 per cent. Click on OK and then change the layer's blend mode to Color. This will subtly enhance the colours in the image and help to brighten it.



4 Altering the contrast and colours in the photo will make the image's grain more noticeable. Some grain is unavoidable, but high amounts can be reduced. Flatten the image (Layer... Flatten Image) and then duplicate the Background Layer (Ctrl-J). Name this new layer Grain. Open the Smart Blur filter control (Filters... Blur... Smart Blur). This filter softens an image, but retains the edges (borders between colours). Apply the filter using the following settings, Radius: 5, Threshold: 2.5 and Quality: High. Before running this filter save the file as it can take a while to be applied and can crash low powered PCs. Now re-apply the filter (Ctrl-F) and set the layer's blend mode to Luminosity. This will recover some of the detail lost by the blurring.



5 Now flatten the image again and save it. Although the differences are subtle, they are enough to make a drastic improvement.