DARKROOM : PHOTO EDITING

TUTORIAL INFO

WRITER	SOFTWARE	ALTERNATIVES	TIME REQUIRED	DIFFICULTY
Shantel Palmer	Adobe Photoshop 7	Adobe Photoshop Elements 2, or JASC Paint Shop Pro 8	2 hours	Intermediate

Saving Holiday Photos

**Disappointing holiday photos? These hints and tips will help turn them into something to be proud of**

CLONING SHADOWS

1 This photograph has been ruined because of a large shadow bottom-right of the shot. This area should be easy to clone as that section of photograph is fairly plain. However, beware of cloning such large areas on more complicated photographs. Zoom in to the affected area and select the Clone tool from the Toolbar. In the Options Bar, choose a suitably sized, soft-edged brush and make sure the opacity is set to 100 per cent.

2 Hold down the Alt button and click over the area to be copied from. Now move the mouse over to the affected area and click again to paint over the top with the new, copied pixels. Continue to paint over the area, changing the brush size if needed for more intricate areas. Remember to zoom out occasionally to see how your cloning appears from further away. Often, mistakes cannot be seen when looking at the image close up.
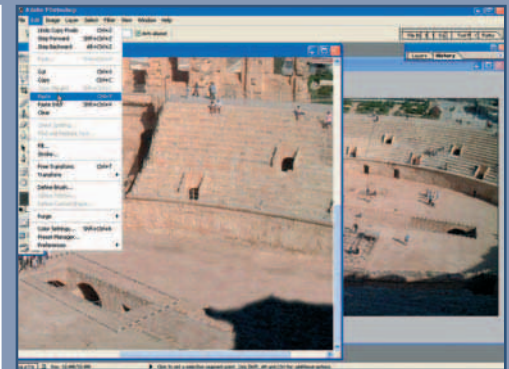
3 If you aren't sure what lies beneath the area that is to be cloned over – especially when the area is large like this one – try looking for another photograph that might show the missing area. In this case the cloned area was identical to the roped-off pit on the left. It would be very difficult to clone that area, so instead select it with the Polygonal Lasso tool and copy and paste it into a new layer (Ctrl-J).

BLURRING BACKGROUNDS

1 This is a nice photo, but the monkeys on the left don't stand out very well against the background. The best way to help them stand out is by blurring the background and most accurate way of selecting them is by using a Layer Mask. First duplicate the Background Layer by going to Layer... Duplicate Layer (or press Ctrl-J). Now in the Layers palette, click on the copied layer, and add a layer mask by clicking on the Add Vector Mask button bottom-left of the layers palette (the icon looks like a square with a circle inside it).
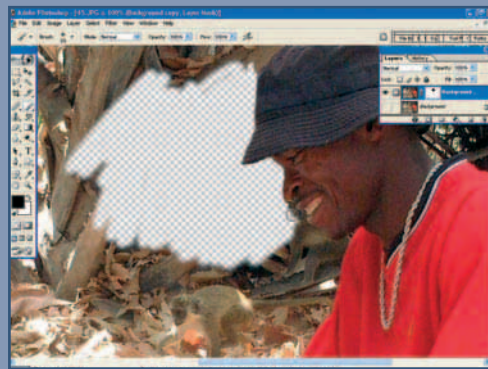
2 Turn off the Background Layer by clicking on the Eye icon to the left of the layer's thumbnail in the Layers palette – this makes sure the areas being erased with the mask can be seen. Make sure the mask is active by clicking on the mask's thumbnail, and then zoom in to the subject, before clicking on the Brush tool. Now paint with black over the areas to be removed, and white over the places that need to be kept. Using the black brush, continue erasing the background until the main subjects are left.

3 The background needs to be gradually blurred, otherwise the subjects will appear to be floating in mid air. Duplicate the Background Layer again, make sure the new layer is activate and apply a very slight Gaussian Blur to it. Now click on the Layer Mask button and activate the Gradient tool. From the Options bar select the Foreground-to-Background gradient and set the fill type to Linear. Make sure the foreground colour is black and the background colour is white, then run the gradient from the bottom to the top of the blurred layer. This will create a gradual blurring as the image moves away from the camera.

4 Using the Move tool, move this new layer into position. If the copied area doesn't quite fit, use the Transform – Distort tool (Edit… Transform… Distort). Zoom in to clearly see the layer, and then activate the Eraser tool from the Toolbar. In the Options Bar, change the Eraser type to Brush, select a small soft-edged brush and then carefully erase the unwanted, rough edges of the copied area. If you make any mistakes, just go back to a previous state using the History palette.

5 When the new layer is finished, flatten down under the Layer menu, and continue cloning any left over areas you haven't covered. To add the last finishing touches to this image, a fake rope was added around the pit by creating a new layer and then mapping out the rope shape with the Polygonal Lasso tool. A one pixel stroke was then added to the selection, the opacity reduced slightly and then a Gaussian Blur applied to slightly throw the rope out of focus. The image was then flattened and saved.

ADDING A NEW SKY
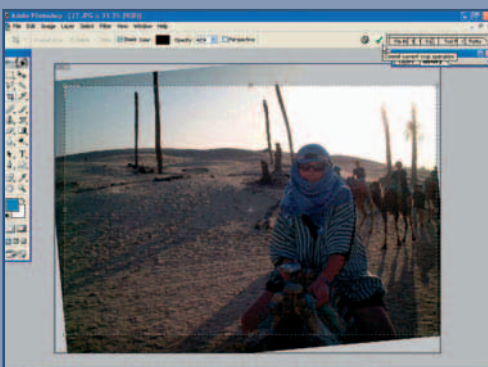
1 First, this image needs to be straightened. Select the image (Ctrl-A) and go to Edit… Transform… Rotate. Grab one of the corner handles and turn the image. When it is straight, click on the tick button in the Options Bar. The image will need to be cropped to discard the empty areas created when it was rotated. Click on the Crop tool in the Toolbar and drag the Bounding Box around the area to be kept. To apply, double-click on the image itself, or click on the tick button in the Options Bar.
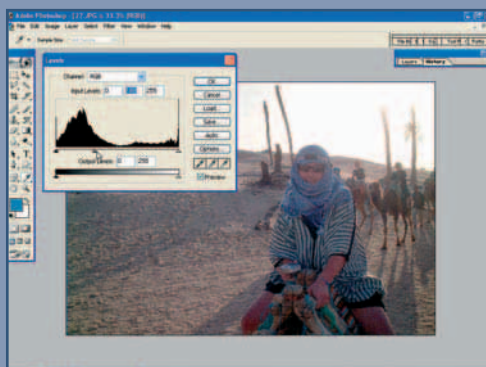
2 Because this photograph was taken with the light behind it, the subject is dark, so will need brightening. First, see if the Auto Levels and Auto Contrast Command will lighten the subject. If not pushing the Levels up manually by going to Image… Adjust… Levels, and moving the middle slider to the left as needed. The Brightness/Contrast and Curves controls (both stored under Edit… Adjust) can also be used for this.

3 The simplest way to add colour to a washed-out sky is to use a Gradient. Create a new layer, and then click on the Gradient tool in the Tools palette. Click on the Foreground colour box and select a colour for the new sky from the Colour Picker. In the Options Bar select Foreground to Transparent from the Gradient Picker. Now drag the gradient from the top of the image down to where the skyline ends, and change this layer's blend mode to Multiply.