



Lets talk Photoshop

Removing Tourists from Travel Photos

Ever been on holidays and just had to get a shot of a landmark but there are too many people wandering around so you wait and as they are just leaving another group arrive? Of course you have, we all have. Sometimes the photo is better with people while other times better with none. This month I will give you a way to get your photo and eliminate as many or few people as you like. While I am using people to demonstrate this technique it can be used to remove other moving objects. As an example you may wish to photograph a busy highway or bridge without any vehicles or maybe a river without any boats.

The basic technique is to take several photos from the same spot then when you get home import them into Photoshop and mask the bits you don't want. This is much easier than trying to clone out the offending people.

Considerations before you take the photo

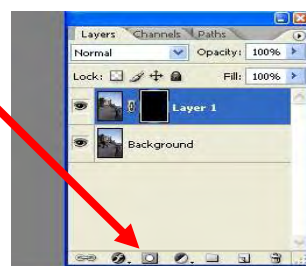
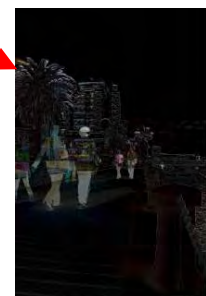
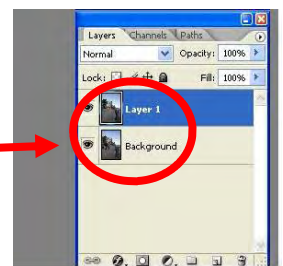
- Use a tripod or camera rest so your images are consistent.
- Consider using a remote release to prevent slight changes caused by pressing the shutter.
- Set your camera to manual so the exposure setting is consistent
- If you are using a zoom lens don't change the focal length.

Taking your photos

- Compose your image and set the exposure.
- Take your first photo noting where those pesky tourists are.
- Wait for them to move to another area and take another photo.
- If some people are dawdling or are in the same place take several other photos.

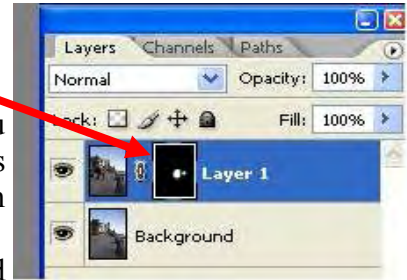
Preparing it in Photoshop

- Import your images into Photoshop
- Copy and paste them into one document as separate layers (this automatically happens when you paste it).
- Check the alignment of your images. You can quickly see this by clicking the eye and see if the image changes. If there is a misalignment then set the blend mode for the top visible layer to *Difference*, this way as you align the images the display will get blacker. Select the Move Tool and use the arrow keys to nudge the image into place. Once aligned change the blend mode to *Normal* again. Don't forget to do this for all your layers.
- Select each layer in turn (except the background) and add a Mask. Press the Alt key (Option on a MAC) and click the mask icon. Your mask should be black (and the layer is effectively hidden).



Now for the magic.

- Hide all layers except the bottom two.
- Select the *Brush Tool* choosing a feathered edge.
- Make sure your foreground colour is white (press D).
- Make sure you have selected the mask on the top visible layer.
- Start painting over the people you can see in your image. You should notice them disappearing. If they don't that just means there were people in the same place in each photo. You can remove them using another layer shortly.
- If your painting was a little exuberant and you allowed additional people into the image then change the foreground colour to black and paint over them.
- Keep painting until you have removed everyone you can then add the next layer up and paint away again.
- Keep repeating this process until you have completed all layers.

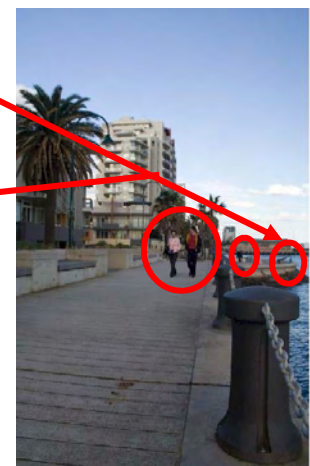


Warnings

- If you use RAW format, make sure any change made to one image is applied to them all.
- If you wait too long between photos the light may have changed. This will be obvious when you do your masking as you may detect slight differences where the people were. Select the offending layer(s) and adjust using tools like *Brightness/Contrast* or *Curves* to correct.
- If you decide a few people are ok make sure the same person does not appear in different parts of the image. If you have used panorama stitching programs you will no doubt have seen this occur.



With these of photos this person and this group can not be eliminated however the inclusion of a third image would have allowed this to occur.



This technique can significantly reduce, or increase the people in your image, it is your choice depending on the mood you are trying to create.

The big advantage is you can take that photo when the light is just right and not have to worry about all those people also trying to get the same shot and every one of them wanting to get it without people!

