

Blending Photos in Photoshop by Robert Berdan 11/12/2003

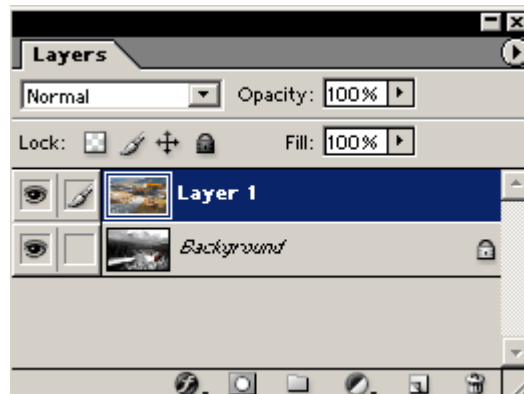
When working with photographic images, one of the most effective techniques is the ability to make one image fade or blend into another. This Technique can be used to create collages or panoramas where several images are stitched together. If you wish to make panoramas it is important that all the images have the same exposure. There are many ways to blend photos – this tutorial will demonstrate several of them.

We will start with two images each image should be in the same mode (i.e. RGB) and the same size. Below I have selected two very different images I want to blend together.



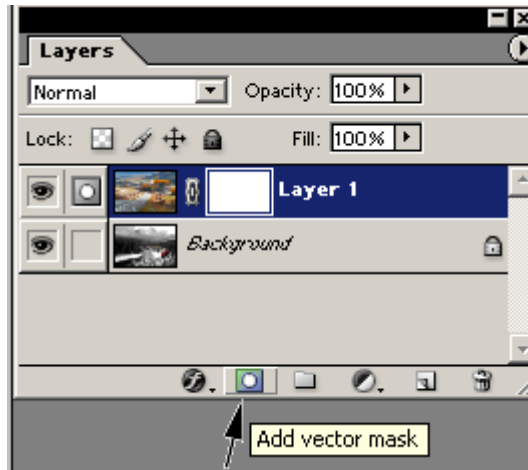
Fall scene & winter scene

1. In photoshop make sure both images have the same dpi and are the same height. (They don't have to be the same size but should be the same resolution and mode).
2. Drag one image ovetop of the other using the move tool. You will see the layers palette show two layers.

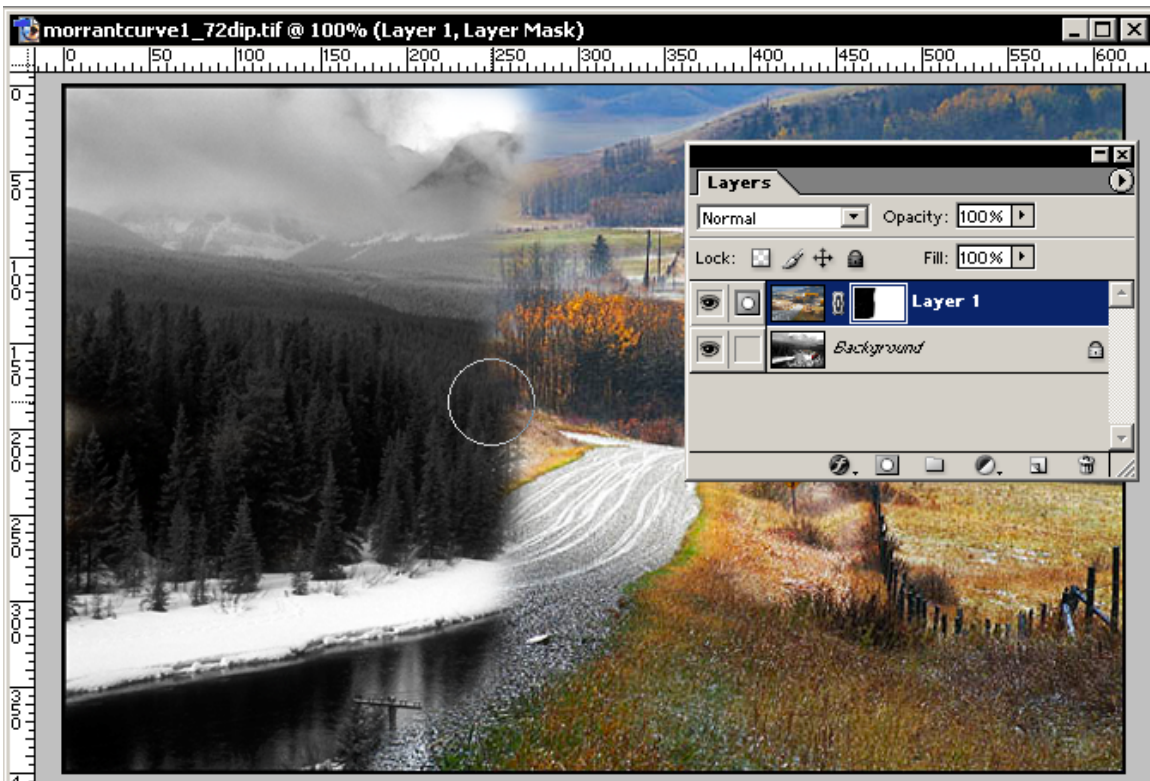


The top image will hide the bottom image – you could offset the images as will if you wanted.

3. Select layer 1 and click on the add vector mask icon to add a layer mask.



4. Select black foreground color and then select a large brush preferably one with soft fuzzy edges. Start painting on the layer 1 and you will see that where you paint the image below becomes visible. The dark area is the mask or area that shows through. If you want to recover an area use the paintbrush and paint with white foreground color. The eraser can also be used to remove white (show black) to reveal specific regions of the photo.

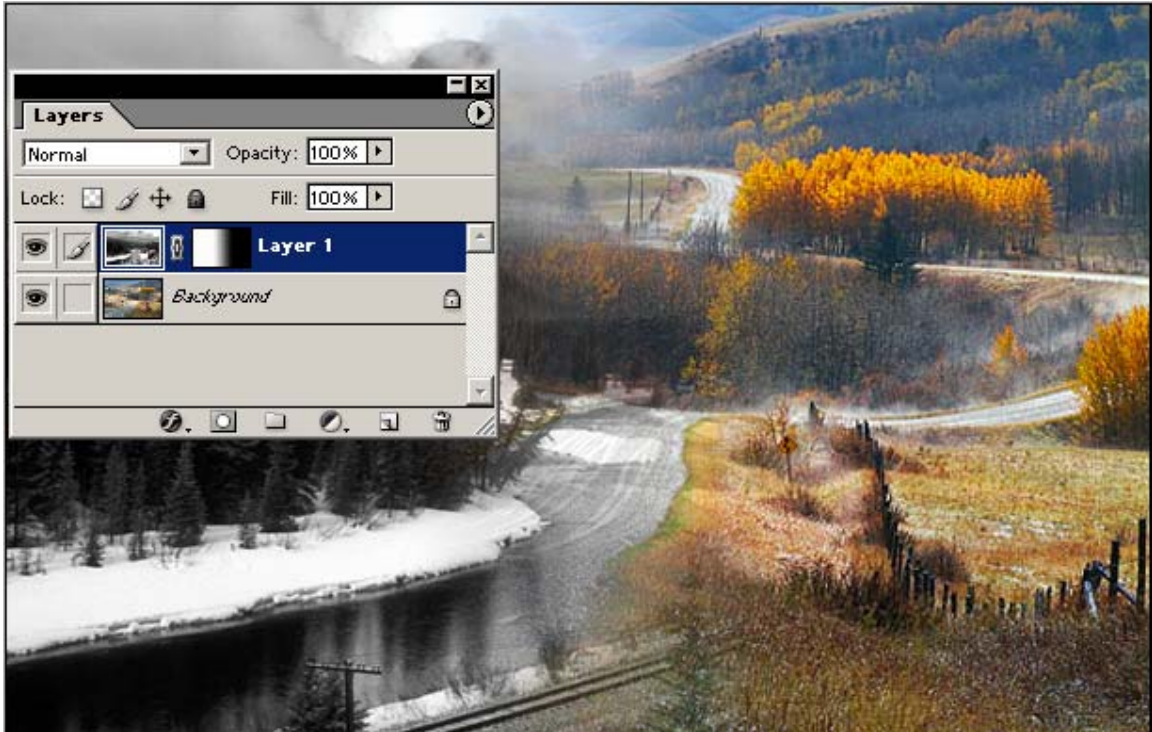


The trick is to use a large soft edge brush to create a smooth blending. You can add as many images each on its own layer, create a layer mask then blend them in.

Using Gradient Masks to Blend Images

This technique is similar to the one above but instead of using paintbrushes to create a soft feather edge you will use gradient masks. The technique works well for combining several photos into a large panorama or you can use the technique to blend just two images. I will use the same two images as before.

1. Drag one image over the other so that you have two separate layers visible in the layers palette.

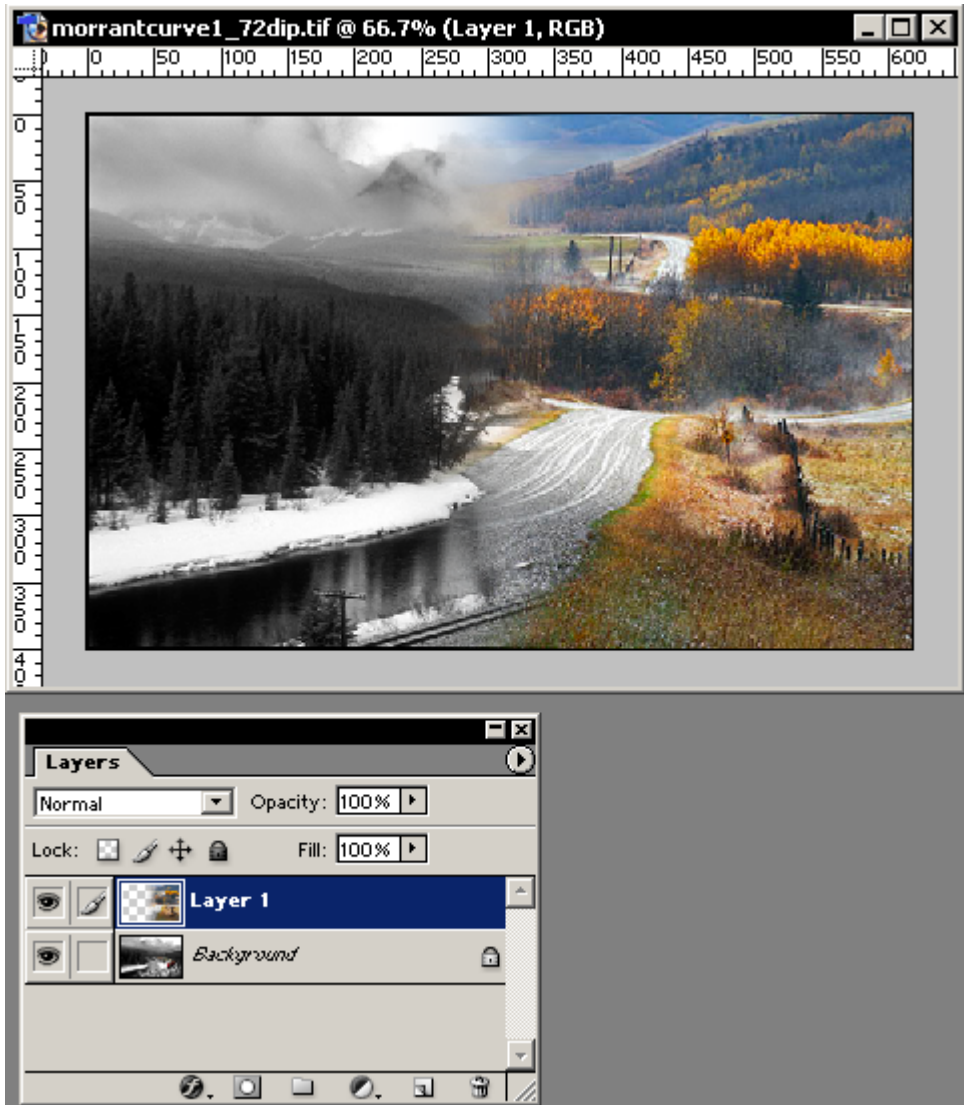


2. Create vector mask on Layer 1. Select a gradient in the toolbox and select black to white gradient. In layer 1 click and drag so that you create a gradient from the right to the left i.e. black to white somewhere in the center of the image. You will see those areas that are white are opaque and those areas that are black are transparent (on the right) so that the image on the bottom shows through. The nice thing about using gradients is that you can produce very gradual blends. You can also use radial gradients to make smaller pictures appear to fade gradually into the background.

A Third way to Blend Photos uses the feather selection tool

1. Start with two pictures again
2. Select one image and create a rectangular marquee around the part of the image you want to copy and paste into the other image.
3. Select>Select menu>feather and set the Feather radius to 30.
4. Select>Edit>copy then paste the copied image onto another image.

5. Use the move tool to position the image where you want it and you can remove parts of the image by selecting the eraser tool > select a large diameter eraser with a feathered edge. Move the eraser over areas you want to remove.



The image you select can be any size – this technique is surprisingly easy to implement and with the eraser tool allows you to adjust the edges of the blended images easily. You can paste in as many images as you like.

There may be other ways to blend images but these are 3 rather easy methods to implement.