

Photomerge - Panoramic Images

Using earlier versions of Photoshop to create panoramic images from a collection of images was a chore. It involved using lots of layers and masks for blending one layer into another. Photoshop CS offers a new, automated feature that saves lots of time, lots of steps, and rewards you with nice panoramic images.

It works this way: You tell the software which images you want to stitch together. Once selected, the files are opened, analyzed, and placed into the Photomerge module in the arrangement that Photoshop thinks works best. Then, they are roughly blended together. If you like what you see, you can use the advance blending option to fine-tune the blending in rough preview. If you like the image, save it. All your layers will blend together, and your image is done.

If Photoshop runs into a problem when analyzing the images for placement, Photoshop will alert you. It then asks you to place the images in the Photomerge window. Some images may have been placed and blended in the Work area. The images that are difficult to place will be placed in the Light box at the top of the work area.

If the program has misplaced images, you can drag them off the canvas and place them in the Light box. Any image that you drag around the canvas will be partially transparent for easy placement. The image will snap into position when Photoshop sees a correspondence in the images. Once all the images are hand placed, the remaining steps are the same.

If you find the image is hard to align by hand, uncheck the “snap to” checkbox while placing that image. You can recheck the box again after the image is in place. It will not change the placement of that image.

There is also a perspective checkbox if you want to correct the perspective on the merged image.

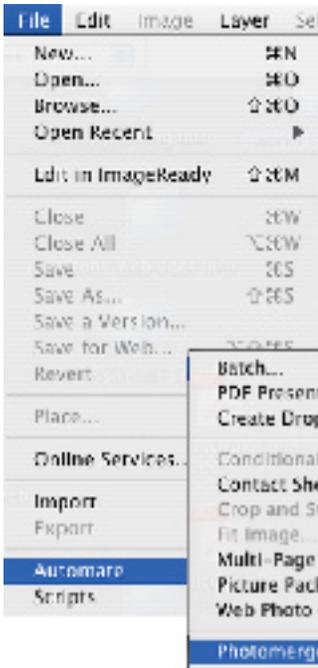
There is also an option to save the merge with all the layers intact. This option will give you an image that places all the images in the proper order on a single canvas, but without blending. You will have to do the blending manually with layer masks and gradient blends.

When the merge is complete, it opens in a new untitled Photoshop window. As in many cases when merging images, you may notice some bare spots at the top or bottom where the images did not match up.

Depending on your Photoshop skills, you may choose to crop the image using these areas as a cropping boundary, or you may wish to continue working on the image by filling in these areas.

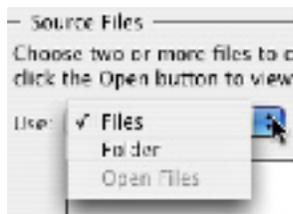


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How to Make a Photomerge Image

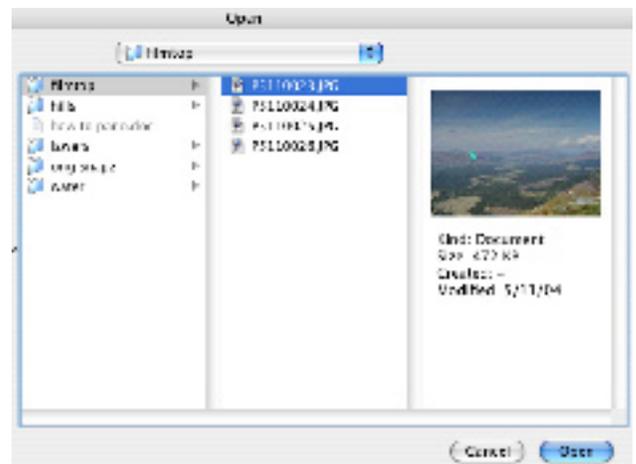
1. Open PhotoShopCS.
2. From the File menu > select Automate > then over to Photomerge. A browse window appears.



Note: You can pick images individually or a set of images contained in a folder.

3. Click the Browse button and select the images you want to include in your Photomerge.

You can use the Shift and Click method for selecting individual images from a folder. Or if you added a folder, you can remove unwanted images by selecting them and clicking the Remove button.



4. Check the Attempt to Automatically Arrange Source Images box to have Photoshop arrange images for you.

The selected images will open in Photoshop. Once opened, they are placed into the Photomerge module and placed into an orientation selected by Photoshop.



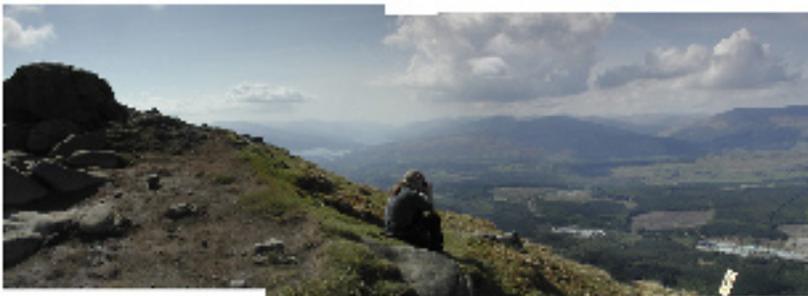
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If all goes well, Photoshop will place them correctly, and a rough draft of the new image will appear in the preview window.



To get a more realistic version of the image

1. Check the Advance Blending option and click the Preview Button. You will not be able to move around the preview window while in the Advanced Blending mode. You will have to click the Exit Preview button to continue working on the image.



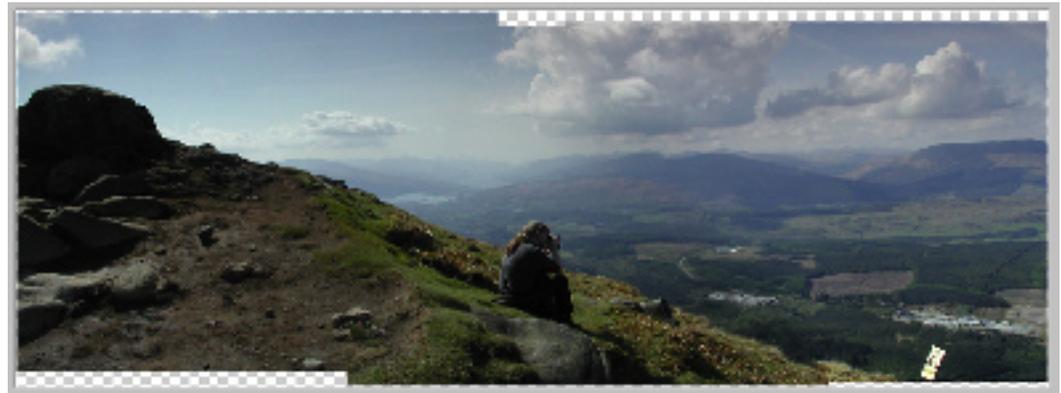
To correct for proper perspective, there is a Perspective checkbox above the composition settings.

A checkbox to turn off the Snap to Image option is also available for fine-tuning hand-placed images.

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2. If Photomerge has created an acceptable panoramic image, click the OK button. The file will open as an untitled document in Photoshop.



As you can see, the above image has some holes where the photo's edges did not match up. Now you can use the Crop Tool to crop out the negative space, or if you are familiar with Photoshop's advanced editing tools, you can use them to create the missing areas or repair the image.

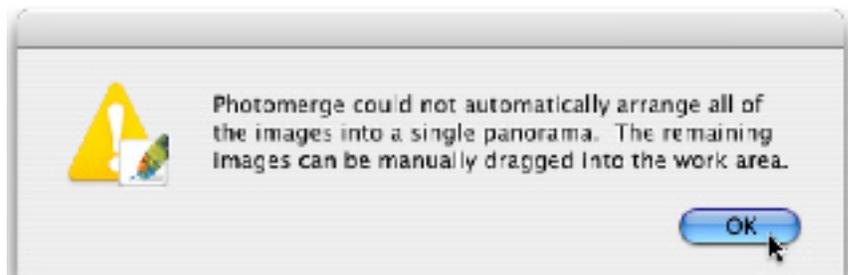
Save Composition

The Save Composition option allows you to save what you have and come back to finish it later. Choosing this option will create a .pmg file. It's a good idea to save it in the same folder as the source files. You can only open this file through the Automate command. Double clicking the icon or using the Open Command will not open this file format.

To access the .pmg file: From the File menu > Choose Automate > Photomerge. Click Open Composition, locate the file, and then click Open.

What To Do Now?

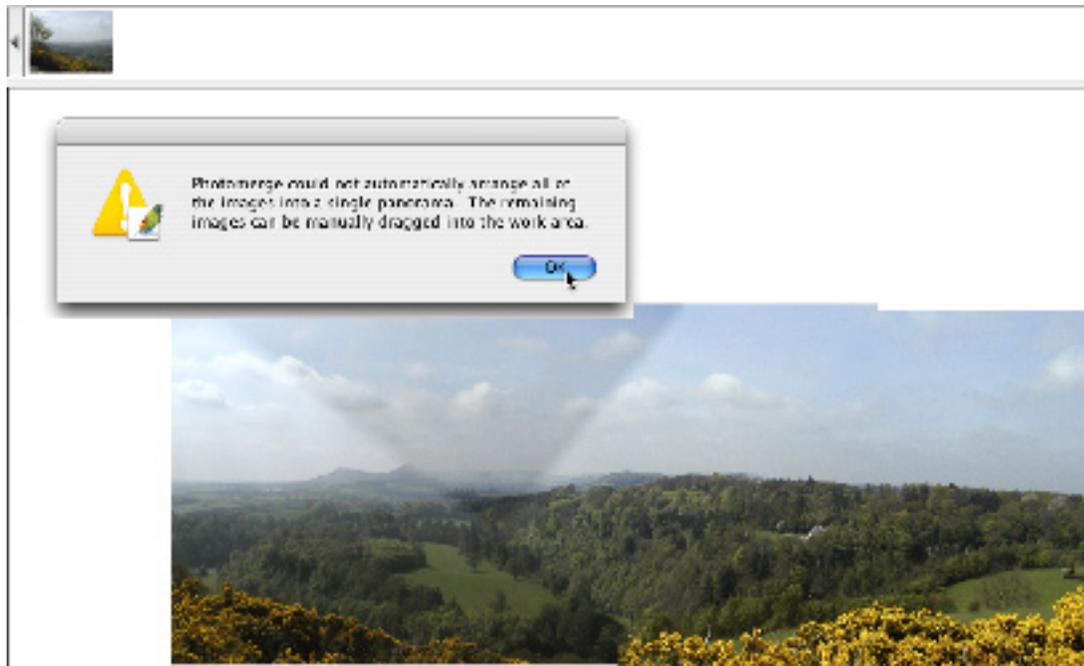
If Photoshop cannot determine how to arrange one or more of the selected images, you will see this dialog box, which requests you to manually arrange the images.



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To Arrange Manually

As mentioned earlier, the orphaned images will appear in the light box area of the Photomerge window. You can easily move orphaned or misaligned images to and from the light box as needed.



1. Click on and drag the images into position in the Photomerge window. The images will snap (if snap is checked) into position when Photoshop sees a correspondence in the images. Sometimes, it is easier to turn off Snap and align visually...



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Note: It may take some time to get the image placement just right, especially if you're using a large number of images to create the panorama.

2. A rough image will appear.
3. For a more realistic final image, check the advance blending option and click the Preview Button.
4. If you like what you see, click OK.

Photoshop had a little trouble with this image. It was constructed using five images. Some of the trees, shrubbery, and sky caused confusion. Two of the images had to be arranged by hand.



Some tricks that may help the process work more smoothly

Importing images with different lighting can cause some problems when merging images. Try color correcting, or use the new Match Color option on the images before importing them into the Photomerge process.

If you have an image that is not lining up properly, turn off the snap option. So that you can place the images by hand.