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## Creating Miniature Scenes From Full Sized Photos Using Only Photoshop

The Sydney Opera House. What a great landmark known across the world! But what if I told you that we could reduce this great location into a miniature using just an aerial photo of it? Would you believe me? You should. And we'll have fun while we're at it. This forced perspective trick has a few ways it can be done - and as with all of my tutorials - a little experimentation on your part may yield more favorable results. So play around with it, try it out - and find what settings work best for you/your photo of choice.

Choosing Your Starting Image

When viewing anything miniature - we usually see it from one perspective only - top down. An aerial photo with particularly thick shadows will work best for this effect, as the artificial light that models are usually displayed under will often times cast harsh shadows and will give the illusion that much more depth. My starter image does not have artificial light simulation and uses natural sunlight - so whatever image you choose may look more model-like than the one I chose. Its all about experimentation, which is why tutorials work much better than any downloadable cookie cutter perspective filter.

My Setup
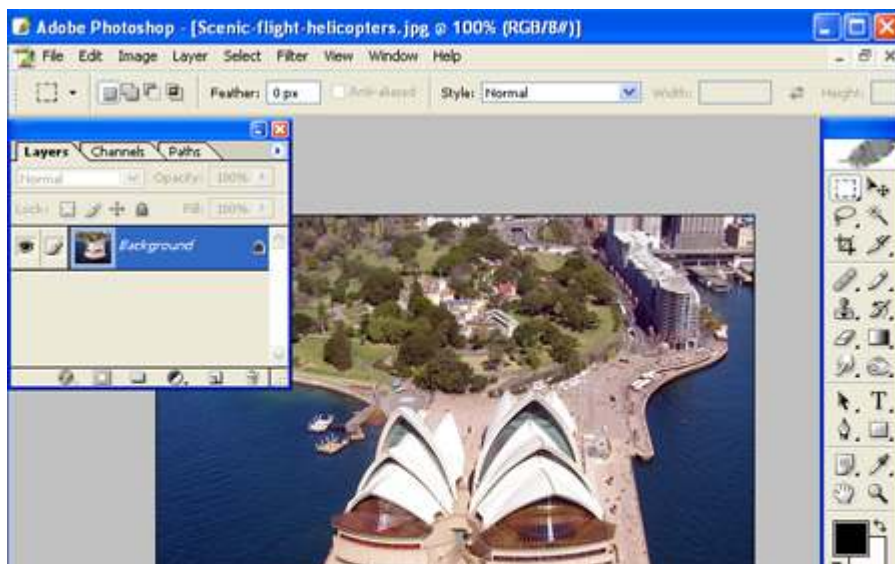
I am using Photoshop CS 1 - so in order to follow along with this tutorial you'll need at least CS 1 or later. I am using windows XP with a PC, so I'm not going to have the fancy windows that some of you Mac users may have - But I think we'll get along just fine.

My Starter image

Here she is from the sky - The Sydney Opera House. What a sight. Now lets shrink her down.

Step 1: Masking

The first thing we'll need to do is very easy. Just press Q on your keyboard to activate a mask on your image. Yeap, thats it. I didn't provide an image of pressing Q - I think you'll find that just fine on your own regardless of skill level. You should see the words "Quick Mask" appear at the top if you have pressed Q.

Step 2: Applying A Gradient To Our Mask
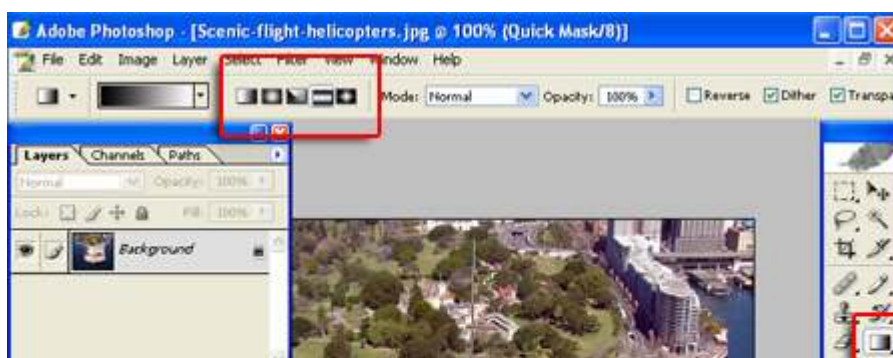
Choose the gradient tool (shown raised here in the toolbar with the white border) and select the fourth icon in the toolbar that pops up giving you the repeating gradient option selected (shown in the top left)
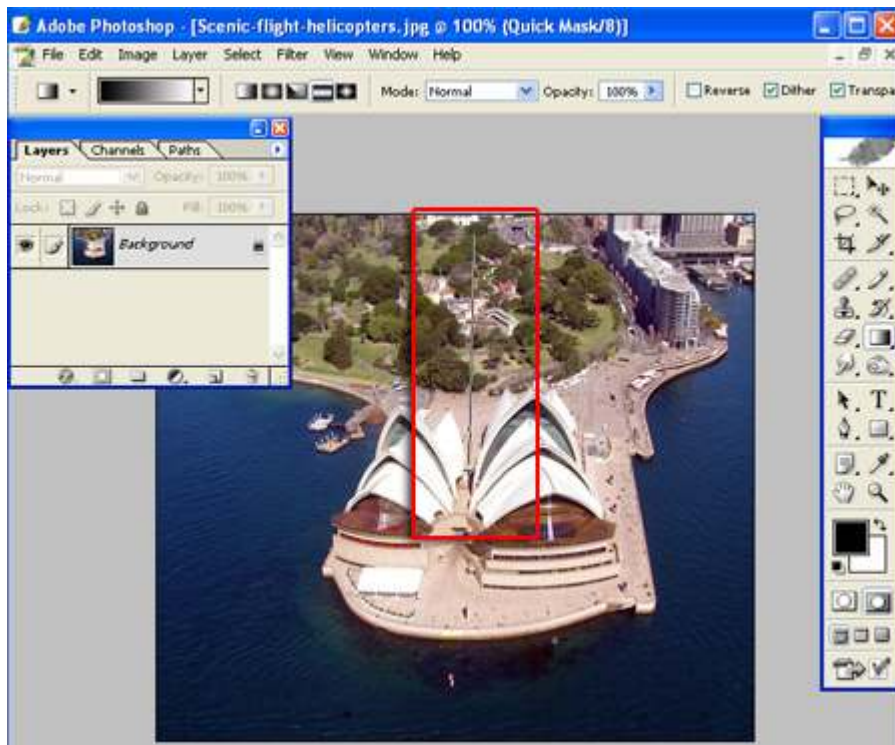

Now we're going to click wherever we want our focus point to be (in this case, the middle of the picture or just a bit lower) and drag the solid line straight up to the top edge of the picture and release it, shown in the picture above.

If you've done it correctly (and I'm sure you have) you should see something exactly like this:
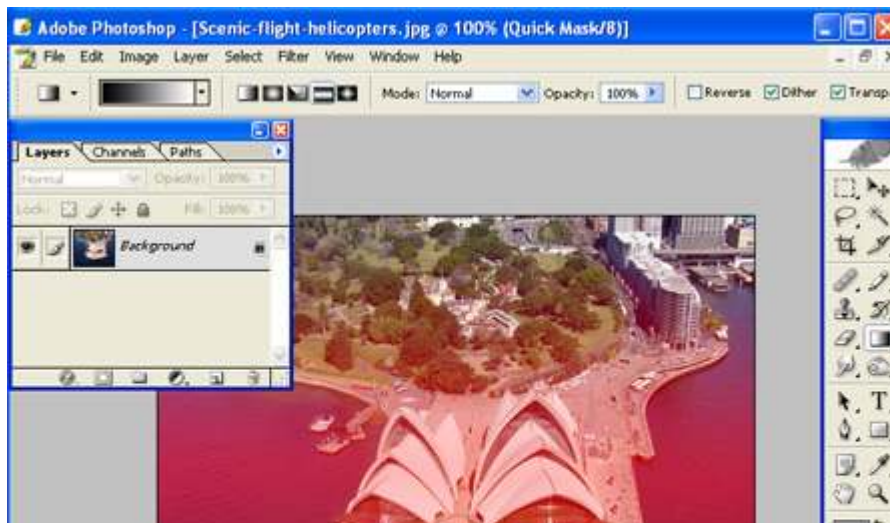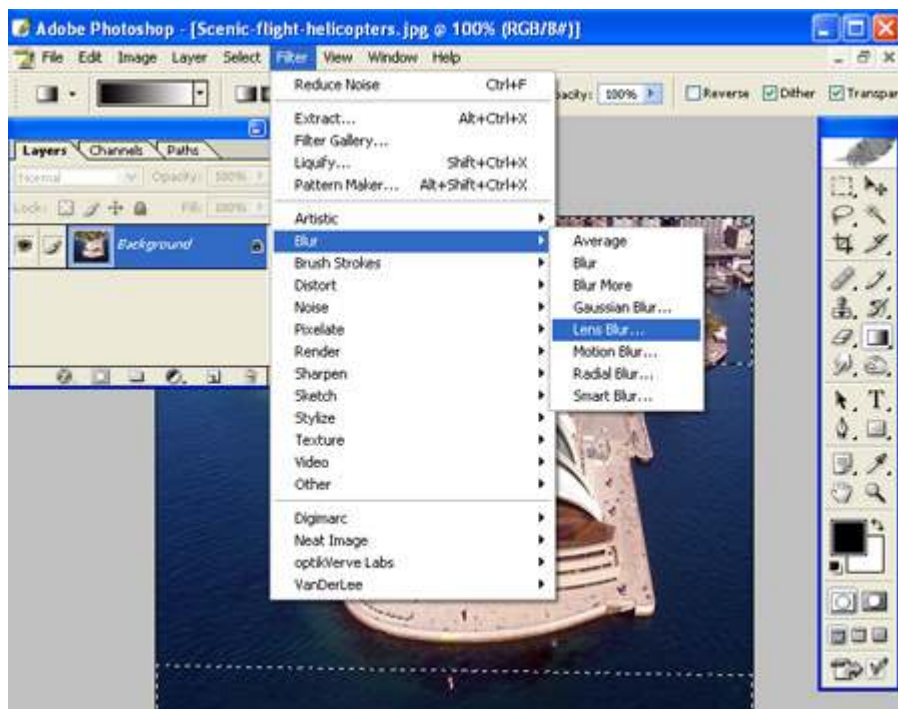
We've just applied the gradient to our mask. Now click Q again to release the mask from being selected - and you should have something that looks like this:
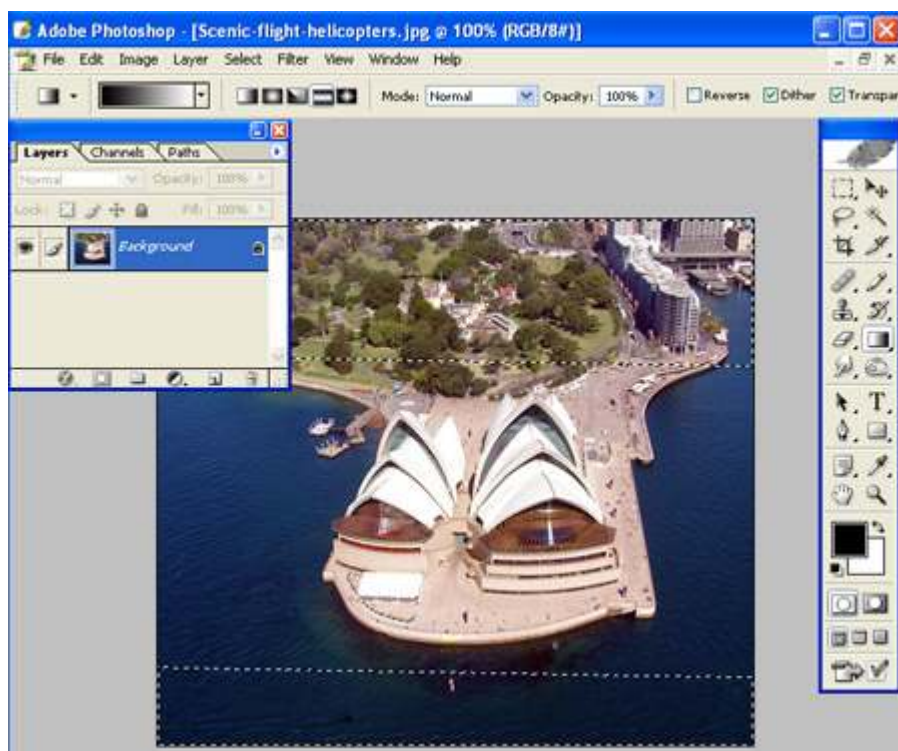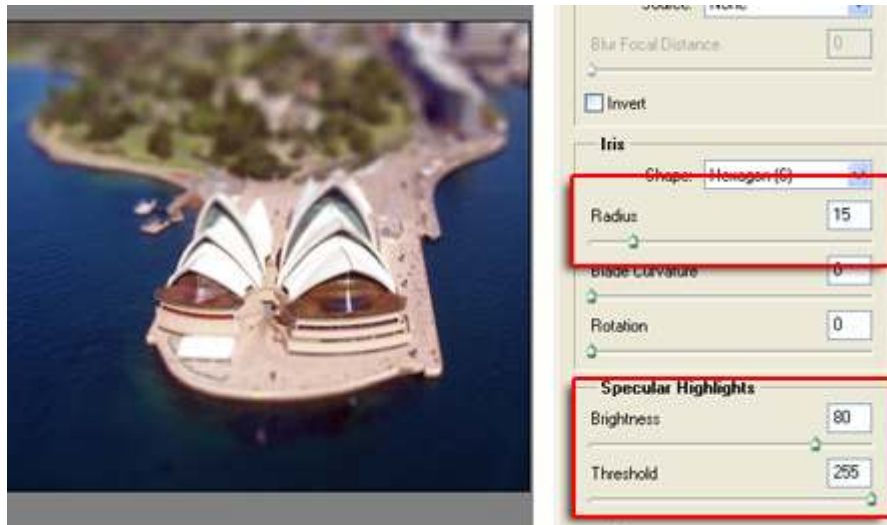

At the top and bottom of the picture you will see the rotating selection dashes with a break in the middle. This is exactly what we want.

Step 3: Applying The Blur Filter

Next you'll want to go to your top menu bar and select the "Filter" option - then select "Blur" - and finally "Lens Blur" as shown above.


At this point you'll see the menu below appear - this is the most important step of the entire effect. Choosing the settings that I am showing here (above) will give you just about the right mix of blur, brightness (to help with colors and lighting to make the photo look more artificial) and such. Feel free to adjust the settings as you like depending on the photo you are using. Click ok and the blur filter will be applied.

Step 4: Finishing Up
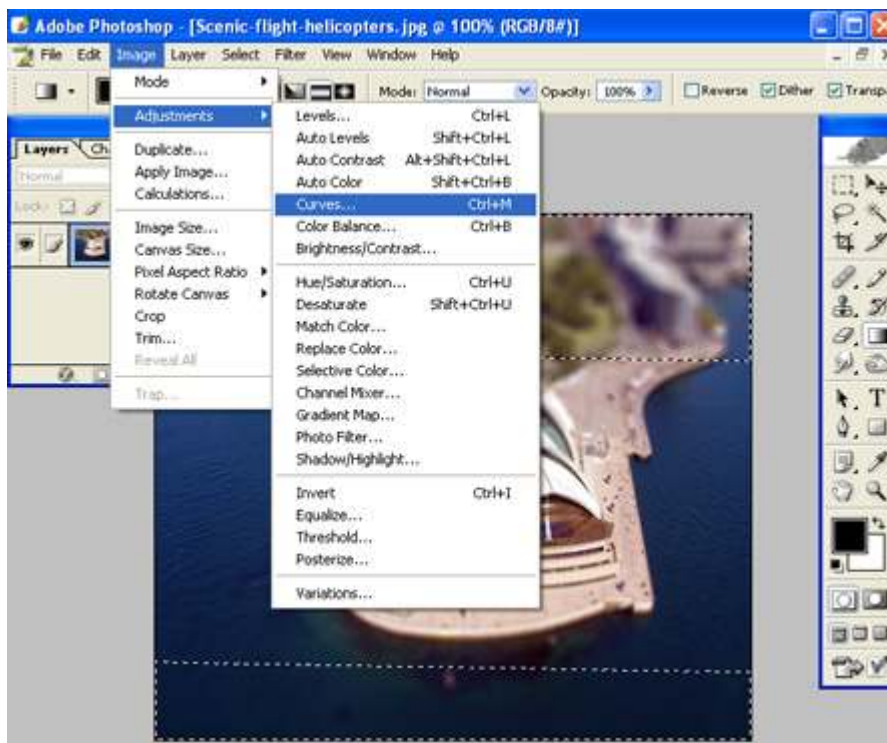
One last step at this point - its to set some curves. Find the curves menu by selecting "Image" - then "Adjustments" and finally "Curves" as shown in the picture above. Move the slider up and to the left (using my example below for a base will yield similar results) and give our photo an artificially colored and lit look.
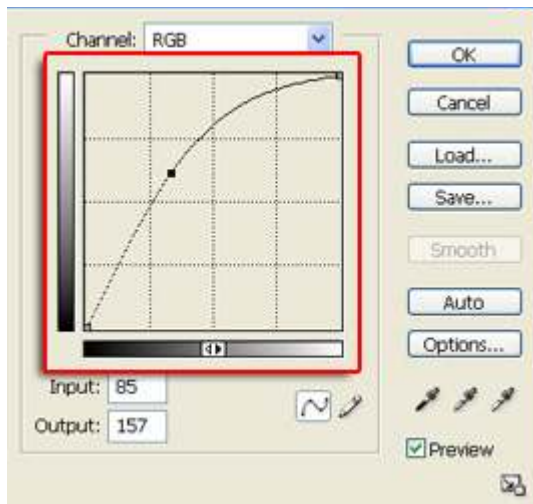
And we're done! Simple enough, eh? You've just learned how to force focus a photo to make a full sized scene look miniature sized. Congratulations, and hopefully your results were close to what we had in the example.

Did you enjoy this tutorial? Discuss it on the forum!