

Transform your travel photographs into fine art images with an Old-World flavor.

BY JIM CHAMBERLAIN

A taste of *Tuscany*

NIK COLOR EFEX PRO FILTERS ADD ROMANCE

For the last 10 years I've been traveling extensively. Teaching Adobe Photoshop has taken me to Korea, Japan and many other places I might not have visited otherwise. In the last five years, I've stopped shooting weddings and converted my personal projects and travel photography into a profitable fine-art business.

My sales have been mostly through art shows and galleries, but my referral sales are increasing all the time. Though it may not generate new business, my Web site works wonderfully as a catalogue of images for my fast-growing fine-art clientele. (Visit www.chamberlainphoto.com.)

Naturally, the weather on my travels hasn't always cooperated, and sometimes an image of a scene that moved me doesn't come out with the impact or sense of place I meant to capture. That's where Photoshop plug-in filters come in handy.

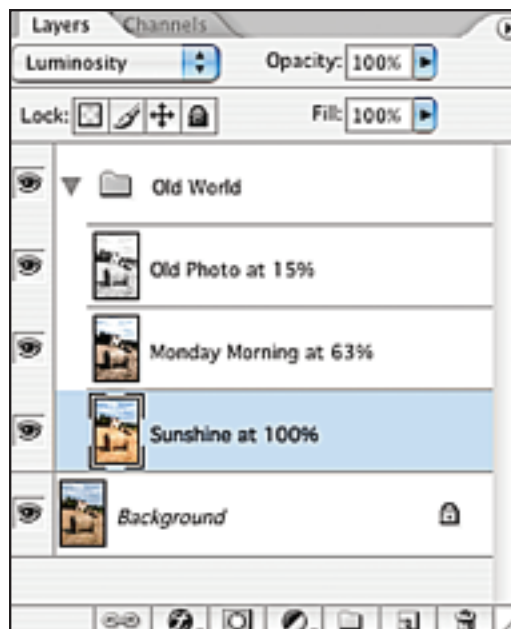
My favorite imaging tool is Photoshop, of course, but my secret ingredient is nik Color Efex Pro 2.0 Complete Edition, a Photoshop plug-in with about 75 filters. The three I use most often on my travel photography are the Sunshine, Monday Morning and Old Photo filters, in combination with the Photoshop blending mode. They give my images a soft, warm, grainy Old-World Mediterranean feel.

1. I shoot in RAW mode with a Nikon D2X. Post-capture, I open the image files in the Adobe Camera Raw interface and adjust temperature, exposure, shadows, and brightness, as needed, keeping the files in 16-bit color.

2. I use the Size option to enlarge the image to a resolution appropriate for the final working size, before cropping. (I'm



Uncorrected capture.



Copy the background layer three times, one each for the application of the Sunshine, Monday Morning, and Old Photo filters in nik Color Efex Pro.

told that Camera Raw's resizing algorithms work better than Photoshop's Image > Image Size.)

3. I click to apply the changes, which takes me to the Photoshop interface. I select View > Print Size and zoom-in (cmd/ctrl+) by one or two factors of magnification. (Images display better at whole or half increments of magnification than in thirds.) Now the displayed image is a little larger than it will be in print. I remove any unwanted dust, scratches or junk. Keep your file cleanup reasonable. If you zoom-in close, you might see some weird stuff, but it probably won't show up in print. I also remove any 20th century objects I don't want in my period image, such as power lines, satellite dishes and quartz lights on buildings.

4. I have a collection of sky and cloud images I can substitute for boring white skies. I've got skies at different times of day with various cloud patterns, and taken from different perspectives. I choose a sky that fits the lighting and perspective of the target image.

5. I often reshape the light patterns in the image with the Dodge and Burn tool, darkening shadow areas and adding highlights to direct the flow of the composition.

6. Saving and renaming the file according to my naming convention, I duplicate the background layer three times. I name the layer immediately above the background layer *Sunshine*, the next layer *Monday Morning*, and the top layer *Old Photo*.

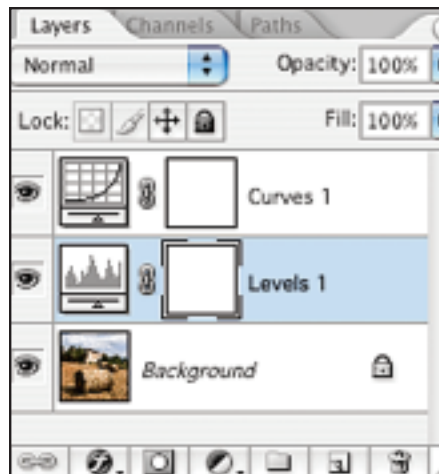
7. In the Filter menu, I go to nik Color Efex Pro, then apply the appropriate filter—Sunshine, Monday Morning, Old Photo—to each layer. Each filter has several controls. I move the sliders around, all the way to the extremes, to find a setting that appeals to me. There's no right or wrong here. Even in this three-filter formula, there's plenty of room to add your own personality.

8. Filters applied, I change the blending mode to Luminosity on the Monday Morning and Sunshine layers, and set the Old Photo layer to Screen mode. I call it "stacking" when I apply creative filter effects to each layer separately, then blend the layers together.

9. I move each layer's Opacity slider until the blend suits my mood. I set the Old Photo layer opacity very low to minimize its effect. On some images, I'll simply turn off the Old Photo layer.

10. I save a file with all the layers intact, and another file with the layers flattened. In the flattened file, I add curves and levels adjustment layers to make tone and color adjustments. I make it a habit to minimize my color corrections before the creative filters are applied, doing just a little global correction in Camera Raw on my color-calibrated monitor. The filters will alter the color anyway, so I save the critical color and tone adjustment for last.

11. Now I make a test print and modify the adjustment layers as needed. I can increase the mood by painting in a little more red or yellow correction into areas where it helps.



Add curves and levels adjustment layers to tweak the color and tone as needed.



After applying the filters, flattening the image, and adjusting the curves and levels in separate layers, my image has a beautiful Old-World look.

12. I print my image on a nice off-white textured watercolor paper. My favorite art papers are Hahnemuhle German Etching and Arches Infinity. I print with the Epson 10000 series printers with pigment inks.



Here is the final image, with warmer tones painted in and final square cropping.

13. Now I make my final cropping decisions, deciding on the final image size and aspect ratio. I liked the first crop that gave room to the foreground and sky areas, but I decided I also wanted a square crop. Rather than crop again, I enlarged the canvas size and stretched the image with Free Transform on the horizontal axis. Stretching an image can add that extra touch of impact.

14. Finally I evaluate the image for sharpness and apply Unsharp Mask is needed.

This filter set works great with portraits. It adds a nice warm feeling to studio or environmental work. In the example below, I took an ordinary senior portrait and transformed it into something extra.

I have created an action set out of this combination of filters, saving the blending modes and layer opacity settings. I can apply the combination of effects simply with a press of the Action start button. Then I just make adjustments to the Opacity of each filter to suit my taste. ■

A demo version of nIK Color Efex Pro 2.0 is available for download at www.nikmultimedia.com. The Select and Complete Editions of Color Efex Pro include the three filters used in this tutorial.

Jim Chamberlain, M.Photog.ME1.Cr., of Naples, Fla., is a PPA-approved photographic instructor. Chamberlain's book, "Lifescapes" (Marathon Press), a collection of his fine-art images, was released in September.



Stacked and blended filters work well to add a romantic feel to portraits.