

Lightroom Tips and Tricks

Creating Dramatic Skies in the Develop Module

By Chuck Palmer

Note to Photoshop users. . . Adobe Camera Raw has similar tools and functions as Adobe Lightroom. You can use many Lightroom tips and tricks in Camera Raw too!

How many photos do you have in your archives that show sky in your picture? If you are like me, too many to count! In the field, a Graduated Neutral Density filter can help you expose for a dramatic sky, but if you shoot your scene in Raw format, you can often add a similar effect in post processing. Here is an easy Graduated Filter you can set up in Lightroom to enhance just about any sky. Follow these steps:

Step One – Open your selected image in the Develop Module.

Step Two – Select the “Graduated Filter” tool from the banner menu containing the Targeted Adjustment Tools at the top of the right panel group... just below the Histogram Panel.

Step Three – Double Click the word “Effect” in the Graduated Filter Tool Panel to reset all the sliders to Zero.

Step Four – Set the Graduated Filter Sliders listed below:

- Exposure -0.25
- Highlights -36
- Clarity 33
- Dehaze 10
- Saturation 10

All other sliders are set to Zero

Step Four – Save your Sky Enhancement Graduated Filter as a Preset. At the top of the tool panel select “Save Current Settings as new Preset” from the drop-down menu. Follow the instructions to name your new preset. I named mine “Sky Enhancement”.

Step Five – Give it a try! Click and drag your Sky Enhancement Graduated Filter from the top of your photo down, stopping near the horizon line. Fine tune your Sky Enhancement Filter to your liking.

Step Six – Erase the effect from elements in the photo that are not sky. You can easily paint out the effect from people, mountains, buildings, etc. Just select “Brush” from the top of the Graduated Filter Tool Panel. Hold down the Alt Key (Option Key on Mac) to change the brush to erase. Paint over any elements in your photo where you want to remove the Sky Enhancement effect. Tip: Make sure “Auto Mask” is checked in the brush panel to selectively erase only from the element you are painting.

Try it out on a few photos. Just select your newly created preset when using any of the targeted adjustment tools. It is easy to go back and fine tune adjustments to enhance the effect on certain photos. Your finished photo might look something like this:



Sky Drama – Cocoa Beach Pier

Keep Shooting! And may the Remarkable Photos always be yours...

Chuck