

Credit: thinboyyfatter

Reference images

Credit: Jeffrey Bea

## Essentials

### Works with



Elements

CS

CC

### What you'll learn

Use brushes, choose colours and discover basic painting techniques



Time taken  
2 hours

## Expert

### Rebekka Hearl



"I thoroughly enjoy painting landscapes, and my favourite Photoshop tool is definitely the Brush tool. I also illustrate stories in my spare time. I'm a designer, illustrator and animator, and have been using Photoshop since I was young. As the designer of *Advanced Photoshop* magazine, I'm happy it's now part of my day job."



## On the FileSilo

Download your free resources at [www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative](http://www.filesilo.co.uk/photoshopcreative)

# Paint a simple landscape

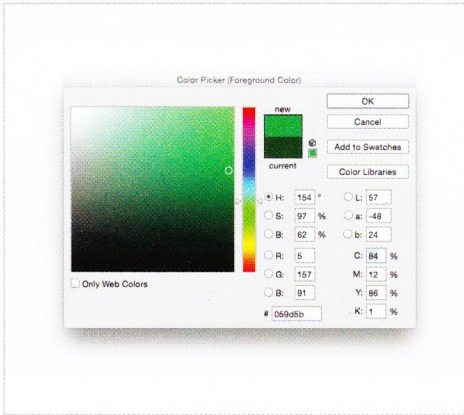
Learn essential techniques for painting your favourite scenery with this easy-to-follow digital-painting tutorial

If your interest in digital painting has ever led you to browse the internet for the work of established digital artists, you may have stumbled across a stunning landscape painting or two - or more likely a few hundred! It's a very popular subject among concept artists, and you can find some absolutely stunning examples. Although, depending on how you look at it, you might find this work to be very inspiring, or very intimidating. Whatever your thoughts on the matter, this tutorial is a great place to start.

Before you begin, you'll find it useful to have a photo to hand - one you have taken yourself (perhaps while on holiday) is a good choice. We've included a few on the FileSilo that inspired us to paint this piece and make good reference images.

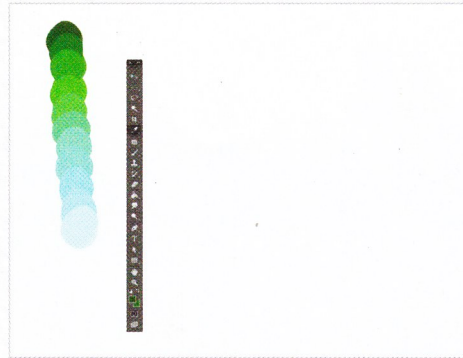
We'll cover the landscape basics here: which colours to choose, how to best prepare your digital painting, and how to paint trees and mountains using textured brushes. We'll also touch on a few more advanced techniques, such as how to give your work a sense of depth and perspective.





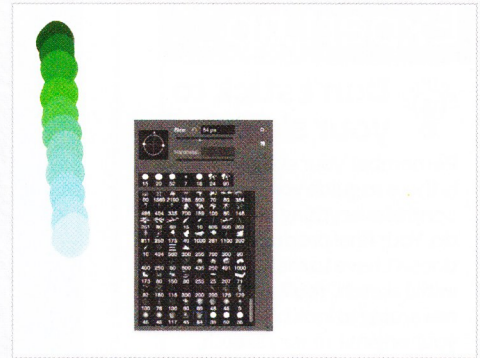
## Choose your colours

**01** Before we begin, we must prepare! Create a new canvas at 2800 width and 5300px height, and decide on your colour palette. We've selected a natural colour range of greens and blues.



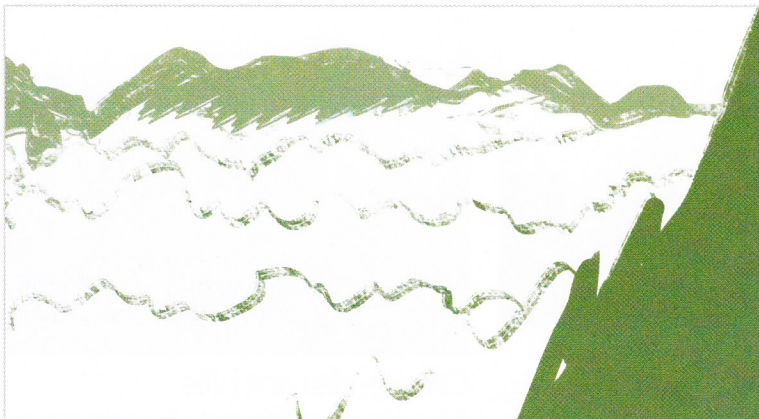
## Arrange the palette

**02** Use the Color Picker to select a deep, saturated green; create a new layer, and use a hard brush to draw a circle. Select the next colour (a little bluer, a little brighter), and draw a circle for that, too. Repeat until you have two blue-white colours in your palette.



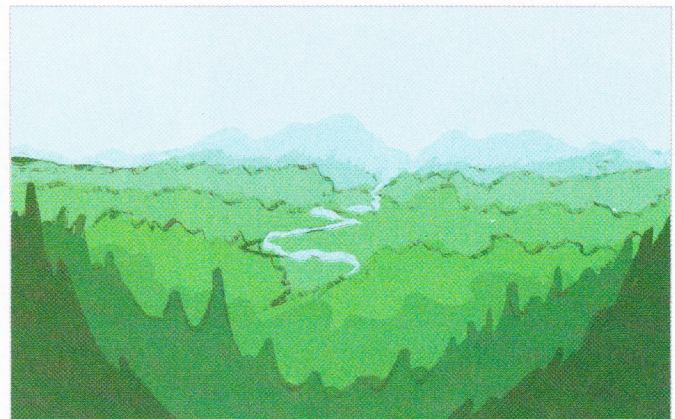
## Ready your brushes

**03** We'll be using two brush presets to paint our trees: a textured brush and a leaf brush. To use the leaf brush, load up Photoshop's Special Effects brush set, and find the brush called Falling Ivy Leaves (83 pixels). Open up Brush Settings and turn off the Scatter setting.



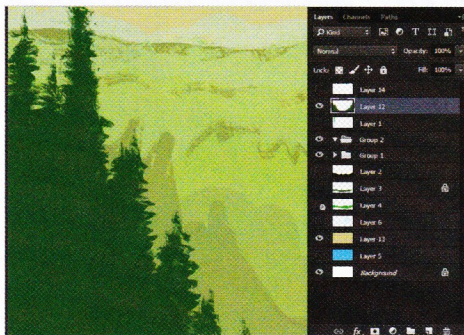
## Sketch away

**04** Start the basic sketch of your landscape painting. Use the textured brush and your darkest colour to draw a straight line across your canvas, which will indicate the top of your landscape's horizon. Plan out each 'layer' of trees (which should get thinner as they get closer to the horizon line).



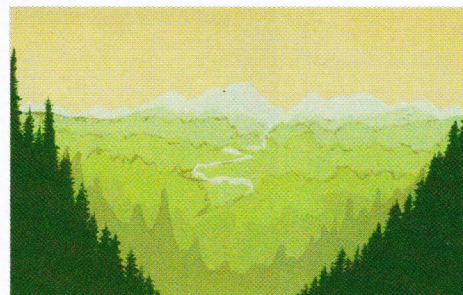
## Lay down the basic colours

**05** Create a new layer beneath your sketch, fill it with blue, then create a new layer above that. Starting from the horizon line and working your way to the foreground, lay down the basic colours. Use a normal hard brush at 200px, and your second lightest blue-white.



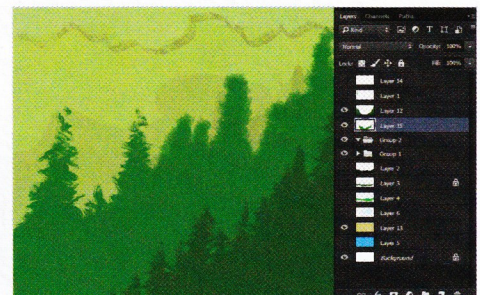
## Sketch the trees

**06** Using your leaf brush (83 pixels) and the darkest green, sketch in the first layer of trees in the foreground. Draw in sharp peaks and troughs to make the trees look tall and thin. Then select a Hard Round brush (100px) and fill in the trees.



## Add some leaves

**07** Now select the textured brush (83px) and use it to draw over the basic tree outlines you've just drawn. Define a recognisable tree shape as you draw. Try drawing in zig-zag motions as you move down the tree, sketching left to right to draw leafy branches.



## Repeat the process

**08** Create a new layer below, select the next, lighter colour in the palette, and repeat the process, but make sure the trees aren't as steep. If you're using CC, you can quickly select the leaf brush from the Brush window. If you're using CS6 or earlier, use the History window.



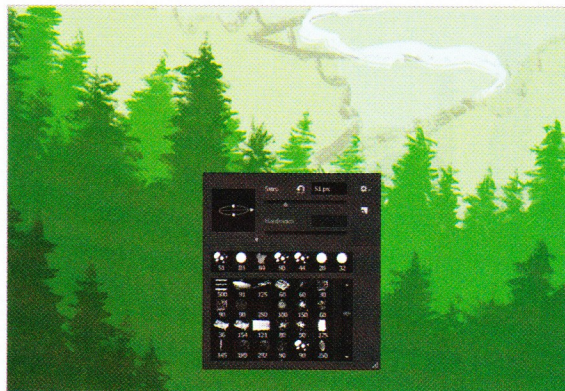


## Expert tip



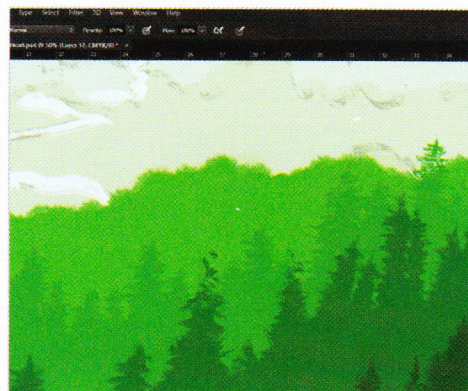
### Don't stick to your sketch

Remember your sketch is there to guide you, not control everything you do. Your final product doesn't have to match your initial sketch. You'll find it rewarding to look back at your original, messy sketch, and compare it to your final work. See how you expanded upon your ideas as you went, how you made it better than you first imagined. Allow yourself the creative freedom to experiment! The same also goes for any reference photos you use.



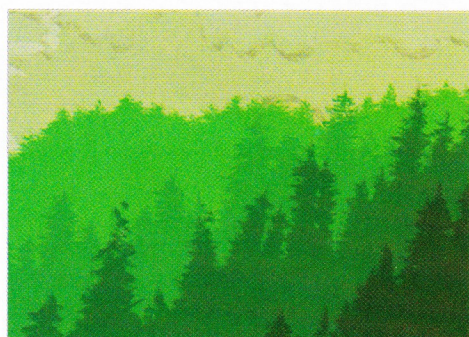
### Finish off the foreground

**09** Repeat the last step, remembering to select the next brightest colour in your palette, and make sure that the trees you draw aren't quite as tall. Be sure to taper the trees using a textured Eraser brush for a more natural-looking finish. And your foreground is done!



### Start the middle ground

**10** The middle trees shouldn't be as finely detailed. Create a new layer beneath the foreground layers, grab the leaf brush again (84 pixels) and, starting from about a third of the way into the canvas from the left, draw a hill shape.



### Sketch smaller trees

**11** Forego the leaf brush in favour of the textured brush and eraser (50 pixels) and, much like we did with the foreground trees, sketch in some more defined tree shapes. Again, make them smaller than you did in the previous layer, and use the textured eraser to refine their shapes.



### Draw a hill

**12** Create a new layer below, select the next brightest colour and the leaf brush (50px), and draw a hill on that side, too. Make sure it overlaps with the trees on the above layer to give it depth. Use the textured brush and eraser (50 pixels) to refine the trees.



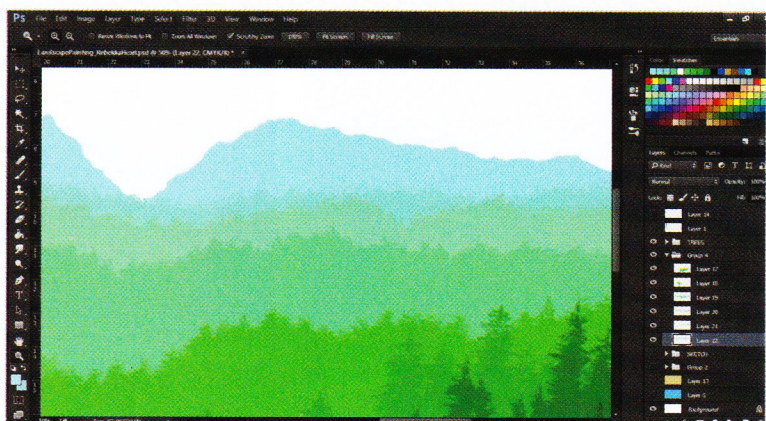
### Create distant hills

**13** Create a new layer below, select the next brightest colour, and repeat the process, but draw a hill that stretches horizontally across the canvas. These hills are getting pretty far away now, so the details should not be as defined!



### Finish off the trees

**14** Take up your textured brush and eraser, set to 30 pixels or less, and draw some trees. Keep your zig-zag motions short and controlled so the trees look smaller. Once done, repeat two more times until you have three distant hills.



### Start the mountain

**15** Next is the mountain. Select a white-blue colour. From the default Photoshop brush collection, select the Pastel on Charcoal Paper (63 pixels) brush if you're using CC, or the Watercolor brush if you're using CS. Use this brush to both draw and erase the edges of the mountain.





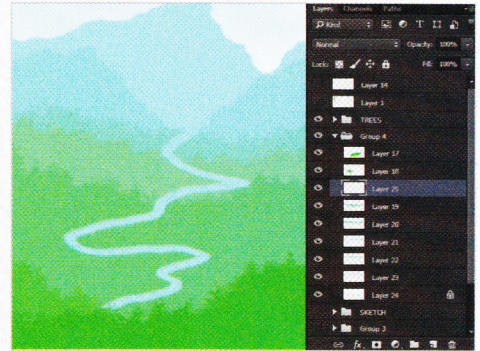
### Finish off the mountain

**16** Create a new layer below, and select your second brightest colour, which should be a blue-white. Repeat the process in the last step, making sure the next layer of mountain is slightly taller than the last, and positioned slightly off to the right, to ensure a sense of depth.



### Paint some clouds

**17** Make your sky layer visible again. Using your brightest blue-white, create a new layer above the sky layer, and use a large airbrush (500 pixels) to roughly paint in some cloud shapes. Use a smaller airbrush eraser (100-250 pixels) to taper the shapes of the clouds.



### Draw the river

**18** Select the blue you used in the first mountain layer. Create a new layer above everything except the three tree layers in the foreground. Select the Pastel/Watercolor brush (63 pixels) you used earlier, and draw a meandering line from the base of the mountains to the foreground.



### Taper the shape

**19** Using the Pastel/Watercolor brush as an eraser (30-50 pixels), taper the shape of the line you just drew. Erase more of the sides of the river that are closest to the foreground to make it look like there are trees standing in front of it.



### Add the final touches

**20** Return to the first three layers of trees in the foreground. Create a new layer above the first layer of trees; right-click and select Create Clipping Mask. Set the layer to Multiply, and use an airbrush (1000 pixels+) to softly shade it. Repeat this for the other two tree layers.

## What you can do with it

### Frame your painting

To showcase your work, print and frame it! You can use a home printer, or opt for a more professional look by sending the image to a printing company. If you choose the latter, remember that printing companies will prefer the image to be set to CMYK colour mode (Image>Mode>CMYK). So, instead of framing a typical holiday photo, why not transform it into a simple painting that no one else will have on their walls? This is especially effective if a holiday shot hasn't turned out quite the way you had hoped.



### RESTORE PHOTOS

If a holiday snap just isn't doing the location justice, be original and turn it into a simple landscape painting, like this. Then print and frame it. You will feel proud to have it on your wall!

