

Panoramic Photography Tutorial



Hi, Denis Knight here.

Thanks for taking the time to check out my panoramic photography tutorial.

In this tutorial you'll learn how to download and install a free trial version of the panorama software I recommend for beginners, and then how to use the software to create a basic panorama.

By following the simple steps in this tutorial, you'll learn that you really can create a great panorama in just minutes.

How to Learn More

If you like this tutorial and you'd like to learn more, I urge you to get yourself a copy of my new book:

The Absolute Step-by-Step Guide to the Perfect Panorama.

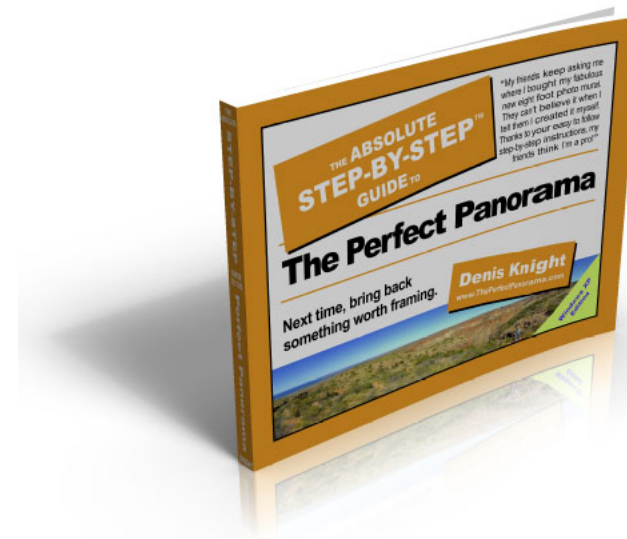
This 94 page, full color e-Book is packed with fully illustrated step-by-step instructions, just like the ones in this tutorial.

With its easy to read text and simple, uncluttered layout, my e-Book is perfect for on-screen reading, and can also be printed in color or black-and-white.

I've gathered up loads of helpful tips about creating your own panoramas, as well as creating 6 complete step-by-step tutorials, with downloadable sample images, to guide you in creating different types of panoramas.

You can get yourself a copy here:

www.thePerfectPanorama.com



How often have you come home from your vacation with dozens or even hundreds of photos, only to feel disappointed that somehow your snapshots never seem to capture the grandeur of the sights you've seen?

I know I have — too many times! Now, why is that? I have a pretty good camera, and I know how to use it. My photos aren't too light or too dark; they're not blurry or poorly composed or out of focus.

There's just something missing. But what?

Well, imagine you're standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon. You gaze out, and your eyes take in a gorgeous panoramic vista up to a full 160° wide.

Now imagine holding up your camera and looking through the viewfinder to capture that beautiful scene. Suddenly your grand 160° vista is cut down to a stingy 40° — if you have a normal lens — or maybe up to 60° with a wide angle lens.

No wonder then, when you get home and look at your photos, your reaction is, 'Oh...' rather than, 'Wow!'

Your camera can only capture one third or less of the majestic spectacle your eyes can see. But there is a solution. You can come home from your next vacation with some fantastic ultra wide angle photographs. The solution: panoramic photography.

The aim of panoramic photography is to create images that match or exceed the field of view of the human eye. With panoramic photography, you can create photographs showing everything that you saw (or even more!)

Panoramic photographs can be created in a number of ways. One way is to take an ordinary frame of film and crop off the top and bottom to make it appear wider. This gives you a frame with a wider aspect ratio, but the angle of view is still no more than around 60°, depending on the lens.

Another way is to use a panoramic camera with a rotating lens, which is specially designed to expose a picture onto a long strip of film.

The modern digital equivalent uses a rotating lens and a linear CCD array to capture extremely high resolution images with a full 360° field of view. But these cameras are highly specialized and very expensive.

There's another way to create great panoramas with a field of view up to a full 360° using an ordinary camera and a simple computer software package. This is the method we'll be exploring in this book.

It's done by shooting a series of overlapping frames using a regular camera, then loading the images into a computer and using a software package to 'stitch' them together.

By following some simple guidelines when shooting your photos, and using the right software, even beginners can get great results using this technique

So what do you need to create your own panoramic images?

Camera

First, you need a camera. You can use just about any ordinary digital or film camera. Of course, the better quality your camera, the better quality your photos will be, and hence the better the quality of your finished panorama.

But you don't need a fancy expensive camera to successfully make your own panoramas. I'd recommend a digital camera with at least 4 mega pixels, and that has either a special panorama shooting mode, or failing that, a manual exposure mode.

Tripod (Optional)

I do own a very nice tripod, but I've never taken it on vacation. It's just too heavy and awkward to lug around. All my vacation panoramas have been shot hand-held. So you certainly don't need a tripod to get good results.

But ... there have been plenty of times when I wished I had one! So I do recommend you use one if you can.

For professional quality work, you can buy a special panoramic head for your tripod, which is designed to rotate your camera around the 'nodal point' of the lens, which reduces the amount of parallax error in your photos. However for vacation photography and most other outdoor work, you don't need one of these to get excellent results.

Scanner (Optional)

If you have a film camera, you'll need to first scan your prints, negatives or slides to convert them into computer files. You can do this yourself using a scanner, or you can arrange for your local photo lab to do it for you.

Most labs can scan your photos onto a CD-ROM at the same time as they develop and print your film, for a few extra dollars. This is probably the simplest way.

Or if you have some old photos that need scanning, you can arrange for your local lab to do it for you.

You should try to scan directly from the negatives (or slides) rather than from prints if you can — the quality will be higher.

Computer

You need a computer. Nothing fancy or expensive — just about any computer less than 5 years or so old should be fine.

The software that we'll be working with in this book will run under Windows XP or Vista on a PC with a Pentium III or higher processor and at least 512 MB RAM.

It also comes in a Macintosh version which will run under OS 10.4 or higher on a PowerPC or Intel Mac with at least 512 MB RAM.

Software

You need a software package to stitch your images together. The package we'll be using in this book is called ArcSoft Panorama Maker Pro. It's cheap, easy to use, and it does a terrific job.

It's also available as a trial download that you can download and try out for free. I'll explain how to download and install the software in 0 Software Setup.

Printer (Optional)

Naturally, after you've created your panoramas, you'll probably want to print them out and show them off. Maybe even frame them and hang them on the wall. If you have a photo printer, you can print them out yourself, although you'll be limited to a fairly small size of print. Some printers can print on extra wide panoramic format paper.

If you want to make a really large print, you'll need to get it done by a lab.

Software Setup

In this chapter you'll learn how to download and install a free trial version of the panorama software I recommend for beginners.

Download Panorama Maker Pro

Follow these steps to download a free trial version of ArcSoft Panorama Maker Pro, which is the software we'll be using in the first part of this book. To download the trial software from the ArcSoft web site you need to first register with ArcSoft by providing your name and email address (see the note in the box below).

- 1 Direct your web browser to www.thePerfectPanorama.com/software and click on the ArcSoft Panorama Maker Pro link to go to the ArcSoft site.
- 2 Click Download Trial. *Continued on next page.*

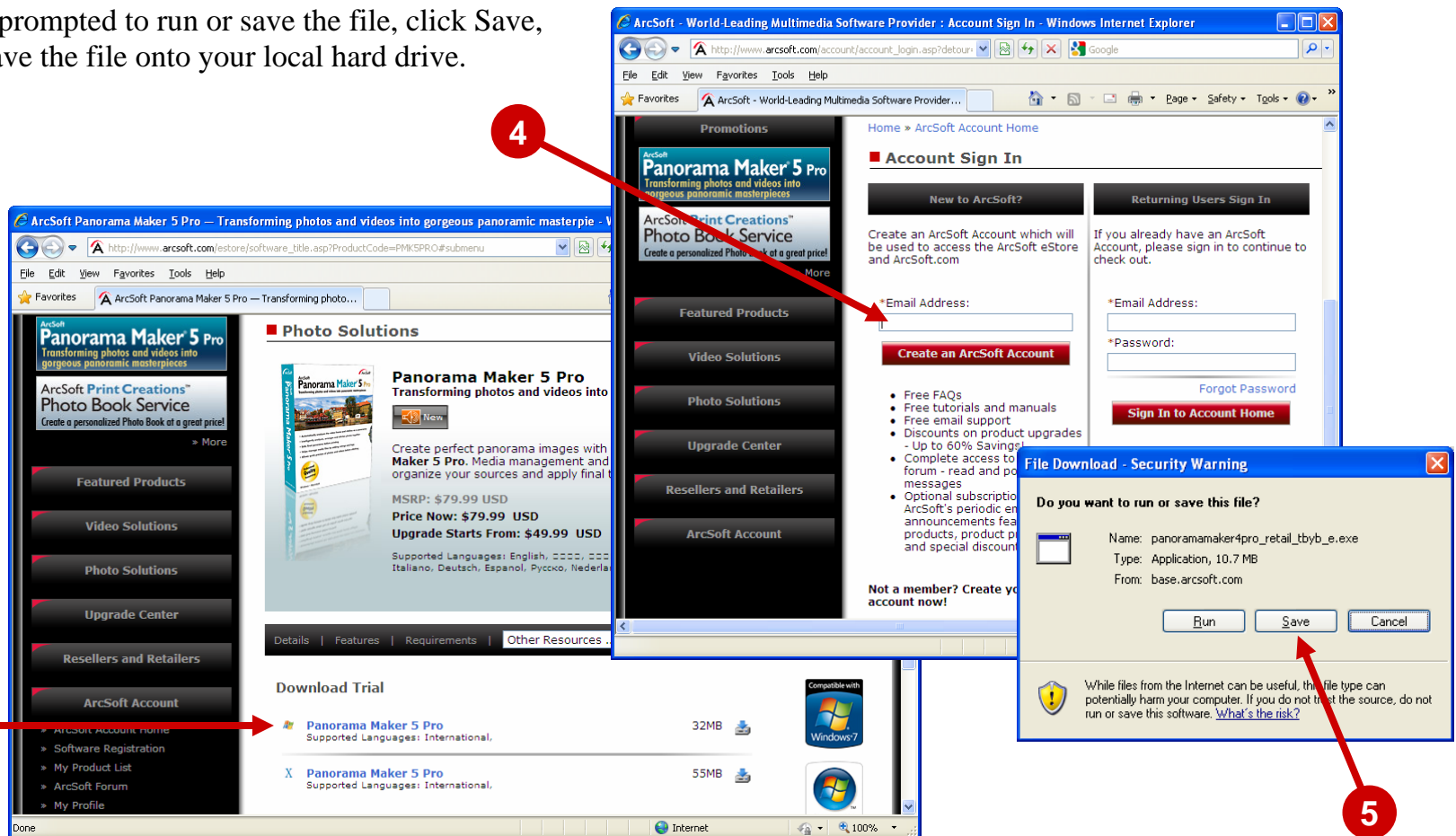
The top screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the ArcSoft website. The address bar shows http://www.arcsoft.com/estore/software_title.asp?ProductCode=PMK5PRO. The page features a navigation menu with 'Photo Solutions' selected. The main content area displays 'Panorama Maker 5 Pro' with a price of \$79.99 USD and a 'Download Trial' button. A red arrow points from a '2' in a red circle to the 'Download Trial' button.

The bottom screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying 'The Absolute Step-by-Step Guide to The Perfect Panorama' website. The address bar shows <http://www.theperfectpanorama.com/software/>. The page has a header 'THE ABSOLUTE STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE to The Perfect Panorama' and a 'Software' section. A link to 'Arcsoft Panorama Maker Pro' is highlighted, with a red arrow pointing from a '1' in a red circle to it.

Other Places to Download

If you prefer to download the software without registering with ArcSoft, you can find the same trial version at Download.com. Go to <http://download.cnet.com> and search for *arcsoft panorama maker pro 5*. Download.com is a reputable site run by Cnet where software publishers make trial versions of their software available for download.

- 3 Click the Panorama Maker 5 Pro link (choose either the Windows or the Mac link).
- 4 At this point you'll be prompted to register with ArcSoft. To register, you need to enter your email address on the first page, and then your name, country and password on the next page. After you've finished the registration process, make your way back to the Download Trial page and click the link to start the download.
- 5 When prompted to run or save the file, click Save, then save the file onto your local hard drive.

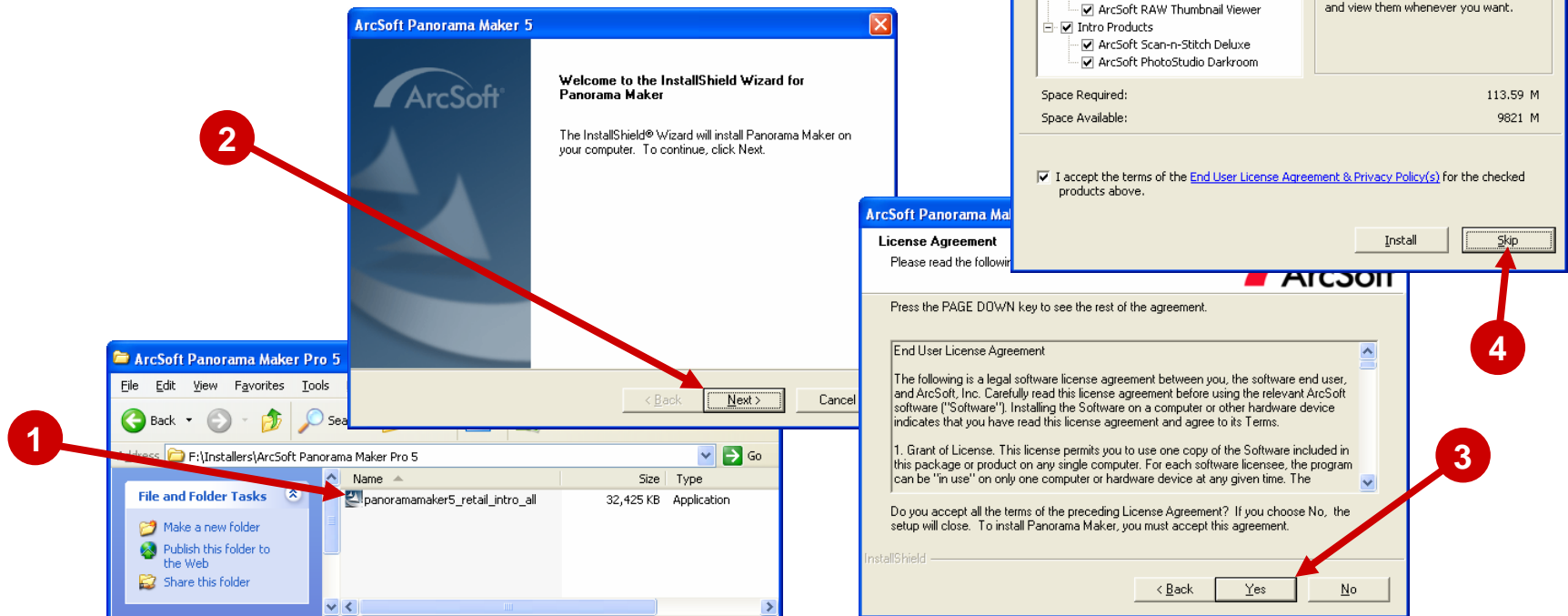


Install Panorama Maker Pro

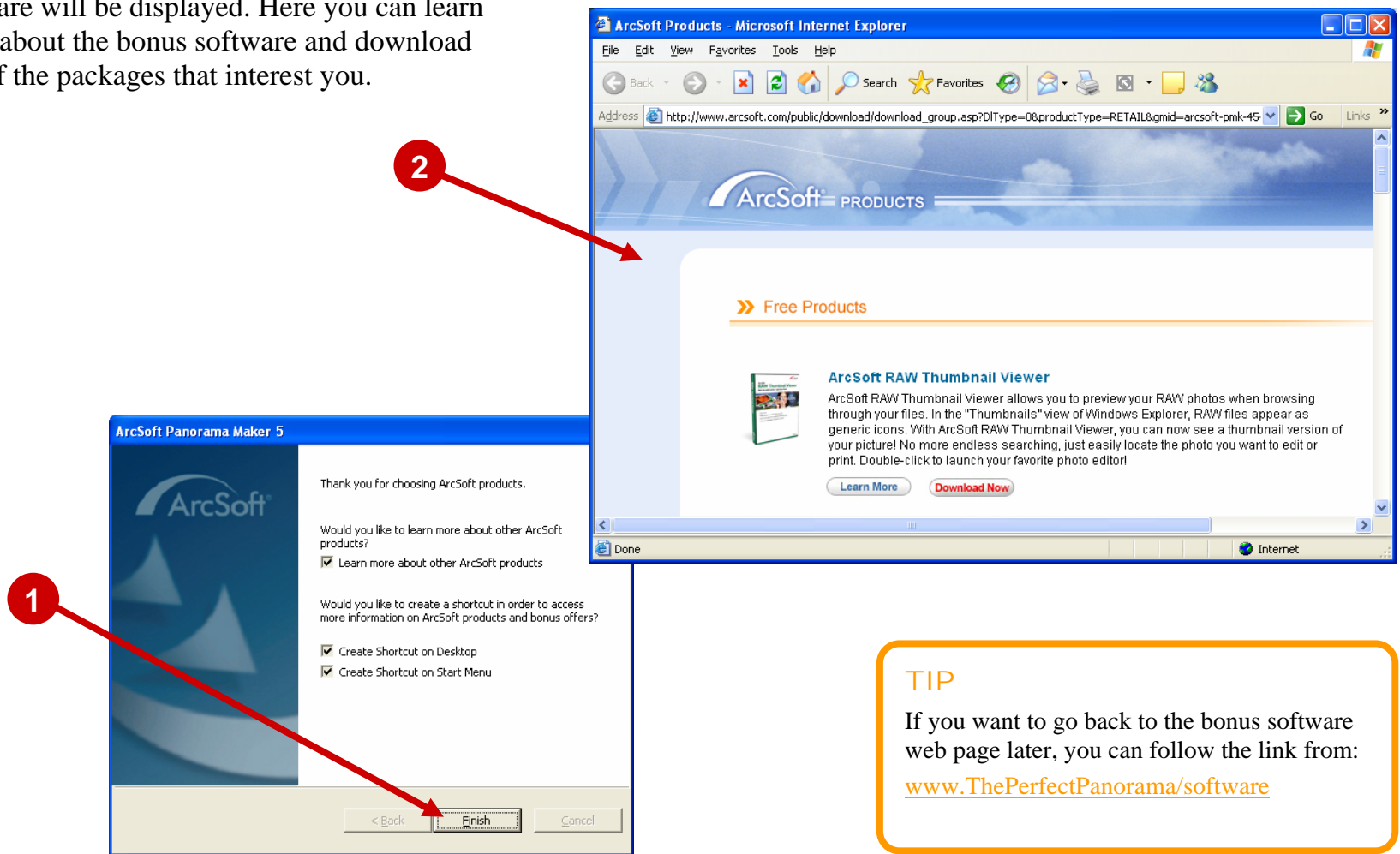
After the software has finished downloading, you're ready to install it on your computer.

- 1 Locate the file that you just downloaded, and double-click it to start the installation process.
- 2 When the Welcome page is displayed, click Next.
- 3 Click Yes to accept the license agreement.
- 4 Follow the prompts, clicking Next at each stage, until you see the 'Bonus Offers' page. Click Skip (see the tip at top right).

TIP: Bonus Software
To keep things quick and simple, I suggest you don't install the bonus software now. After the installation is finished you can read more about the bonuses, and download them if you want to.



- 1 When you see the message ‘Thank you for choosing ArcSoft products’, click Finish.
- 2 A web page with more details about the bonus software will be displayed. Here you can learn more about the bonus software and download any of the packages that interest you.



TIP

If you want to go back to the bonus software web page later, you can follow the link from: www.ThePerfectPanorama/software

Your First Panorama

Now that you've downloaded and installed the software, it's time to create your first panorama.

Let's start with a simple two frame sequence. Since this is your first panorama, I suggest you follow along using the sample images, which you can download from:

www.ThePerfectPanorama.com/tutorial

These are from a family camping trip in Western Australia.



After you've completed the tutorial using the sample images, have a go at making your own two frame panorama using your own images.

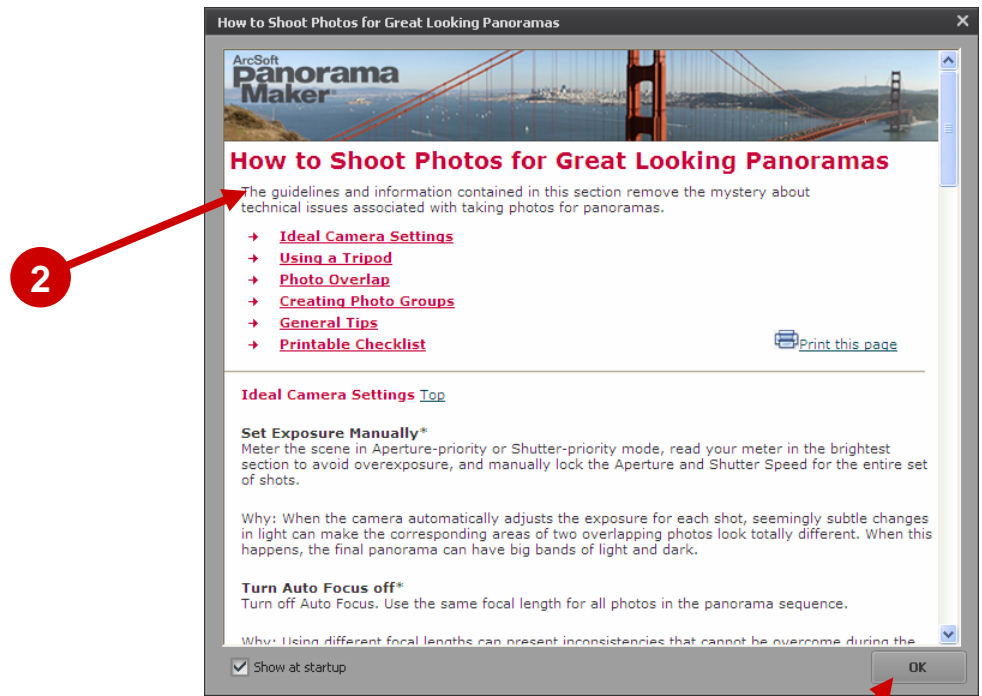
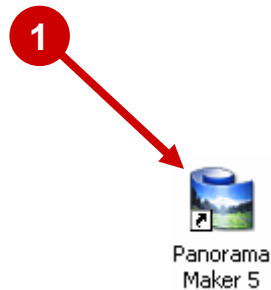
Your subject could be anything, but keep it simple for now so you can focus on the basics. You could make a panorama of your house.

Just choose your subject and shoot two overlapping photos. Remember to follow the shooting tips from Chapter 1.



Now you're ready to start up the Panorama Maker Pro software and start making your first panorama.

- 1 Double-click on the Panorama Maker 5 icon on your desktop — or you can click Start and then select Programs / ArcSoft Panorama Maker 5 / Panorama Maker 5.
- 2 The program will start and a page of tips for shooting panoramic photos will be displayed.
- 3 Click OK.



Select your Photos

If your photos were taken with a digital camera, they'll be tagged with the date and time when they were taken, and the software will try to automatically select the remaining photos in the sequence based on the time they were taken. If they were taken with a film camera and then scanned, you will need to select each photo in the sequence individually.

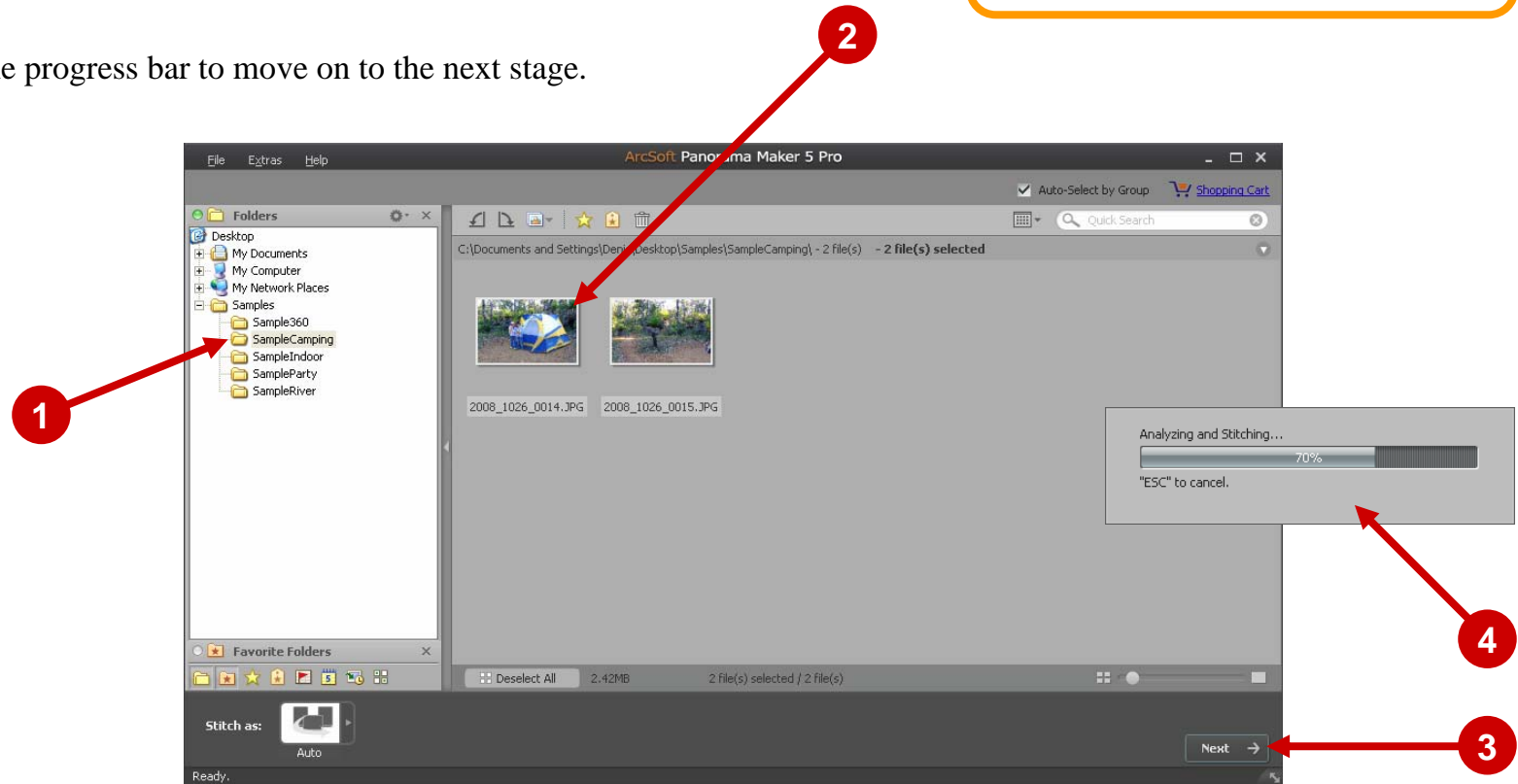
- 1 Select the folder containing your photos in the pane on the left.
- 2 Click on the first photo to select it. The remaining photos in the sequence should be selected automatically.
- 3 After you have selected all the photos, click Next to start stitching.
- 4 Wait for the progress bar to move on to the next stage.

TIP: Sample Images

You can download the sample images used in this chapter from:

www.ThePerfectPanorama.com/samples

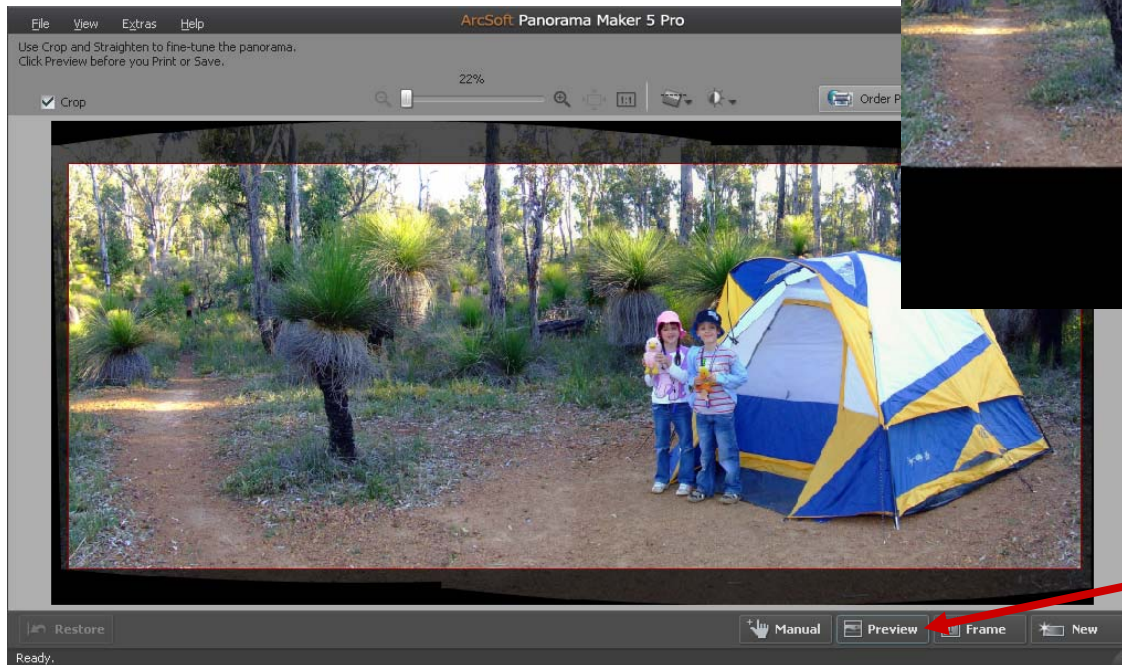
Download the *SampleCamping.zip* file and unzip it to get the two photos.



Stitch and Check your Results

After the stitching process finishes, the software will display your panorama. You can use the Preview button to get a closer look and check for any defects.

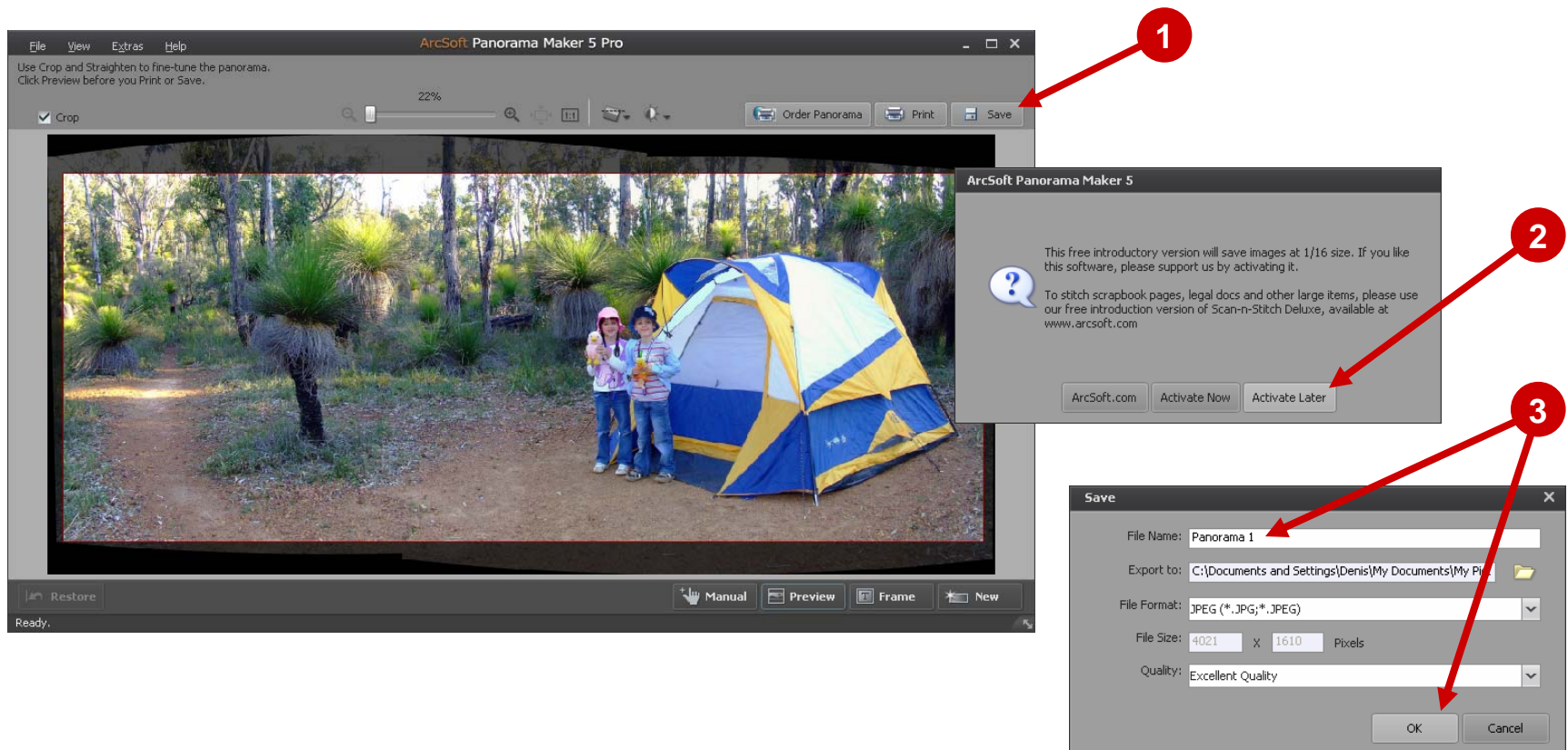
- 1 Click Preview to see the panorama in full screen mode.
- 2 Use the magnifier buttons to zoom in and out. While zoomed in, click and drag the image to move it around.
- 3 It's a perfect result! Click X to return to the main screen.



Save your Panorama

After you've checked your panorama and are happy with it, you should save it on your hard disk to make sure your work isn't lost.

- 1 Click Save.
- 2 If you're using the trial version of the software, you'll see a message telling you that your image will be saved at 1/16 size. Click Activate Later.
- 3 Give your panorama a name and choose where to save it, then click OK.



reading all that information and wind up more confused than when you started.

But my book simply lays out what you need to do to create your own panoramas, in plain, simple, step-by-step language that anyone can follow.

And, it's fully illustrated.

Plus, each tutorial comes with its own sample photos that you can download and use to follow along, every step of the way.

My book is the only one of its kind, and I'm regularly updating it to make sure it stays current.

Some of the Secrets You'll Discover

Some of the topics that I cover in the book include:

- The top twelve photo shooting secrets for creating the perfect panorama.
- How to manually adjust the stitching points and blending path for perfect results every time, which means you'll never be stumped by stitching errors or ghosting again.
- How to straighten and crop your panorama, and even adjust the brightness and contrast all within the panorama software, which means you can get great results without having to master any other tools.

- How to add a virtual frame and title, and then print your panorama.
- How to create 360° virtual tour style panoramas, and save them in QuickTime, flash or java format, which means now you, too can create your own virtual tours and publish them on the internet.
- How to create seamless panoramic group photos and other scenes of moving people, without ghosting or other common problems, which means your options for shooting at parties and in public places just got a whole lot wider.
- Information about the six most common panorama problems, with simple techniques to solve them.

You can get yourself a copy here:

www.thePerfectPanorama.com

