

HOW *TO DO* SKY
REPLACEMENTS
THE RIGHT WAY



AVOIDING THE 3 DEADLY SINS OF SKY
REPLACEMENT IN PHOTOSHOP & LUMINAR

UNDERSTANDING UNDERSTANDING UNDERSTANDING
THE DIFFERENT THE DIFFERENT THE DIFFERENT
TYPES OF SKIES TYPES TYPES

IGHT DAYLIGHT DAY



The most prevalent type of light is daylight, and since photography translates to "writing with light," many photographers often find it somewhat "boring." They prefer to capture subjects in more beautiful and unique moments. Of course, this perspective is subjective and based on personal taste.

OUR GOLDEN HOUR GO



When the sun starts to lower, this is the start of the golden hour. At first, it can look pretty white, but...

OUR GOLDEN HOUR GO



As the sun descends, the sky takes on a more vibrant yellow hue, provided certain conditions are met. Typically, this occurs when there are no clouds on the horizon, and any clouds present are situated only above it.

SUNSET SUNSET SUNSET



As the sun dips below the horizon, provided that specific conditions are met—typically a clear sky and certain cloud coverage—you can witness a stunning array of colors such as orange, yellow, and magenta. This moment is often considered the most beautiful part of the day.

SUNSET SUNSET SUNSET



Other examples

OUR BLUE HOUR BLU



The blue hour is one of my favorite times of the day. It occurs just after sunset when the city lights begin to illuminate and the sky hasn't completely darkened yet. I refer to it as the "magic window" because the contrasts are subtle, allowing for stunning photography.

The great news is that even on overcast or clear days, while you might miss out on a perfect golden hour or sunset, you're likely to achieve a beautiful blue hour. This technique was very valuable during my book project on London, especially given the numerous overcast days. The photo above of Tower Bridge showcases this perfectly.

OUR BLUE HOUR BLU

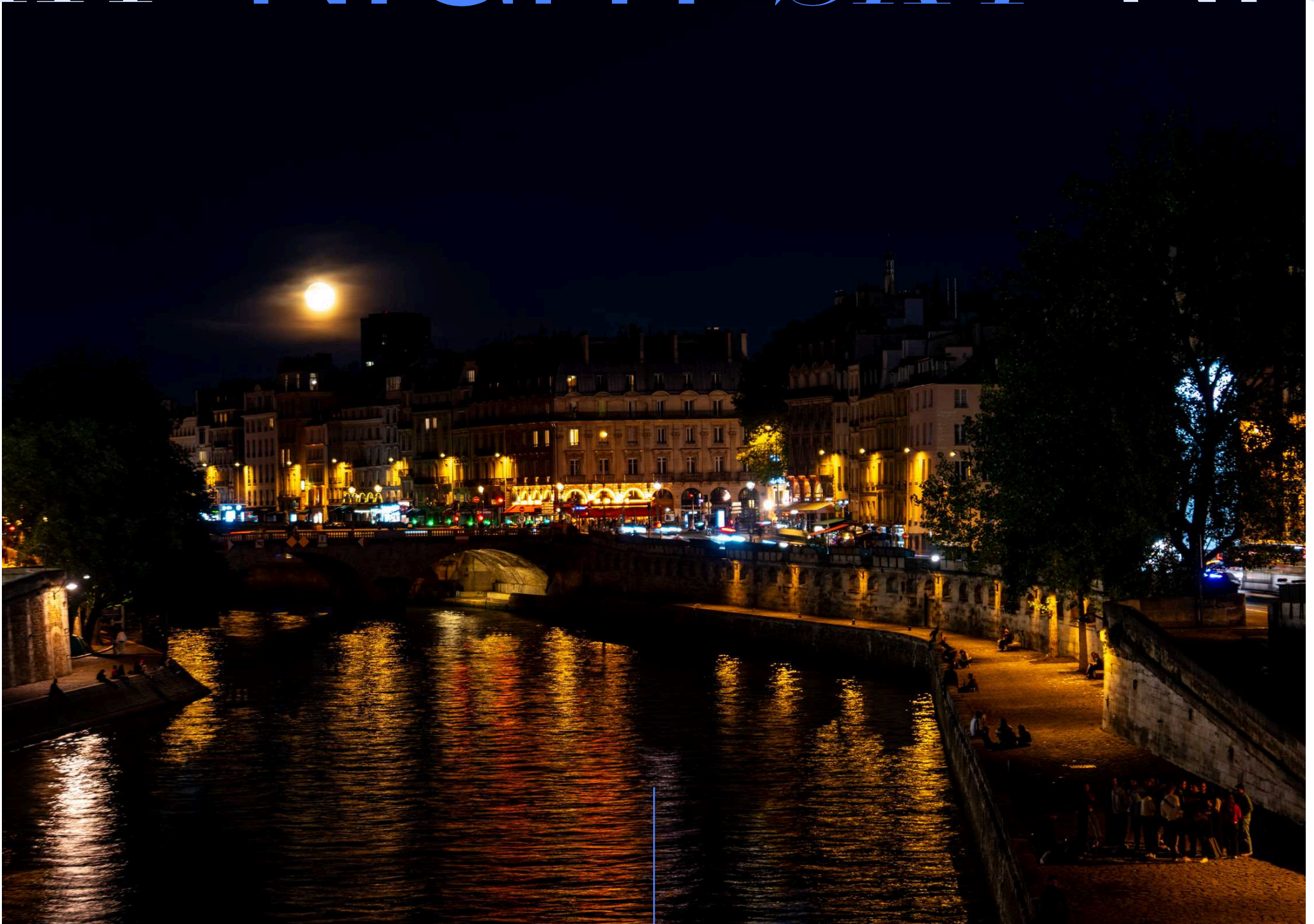


Blue Hour over cast day



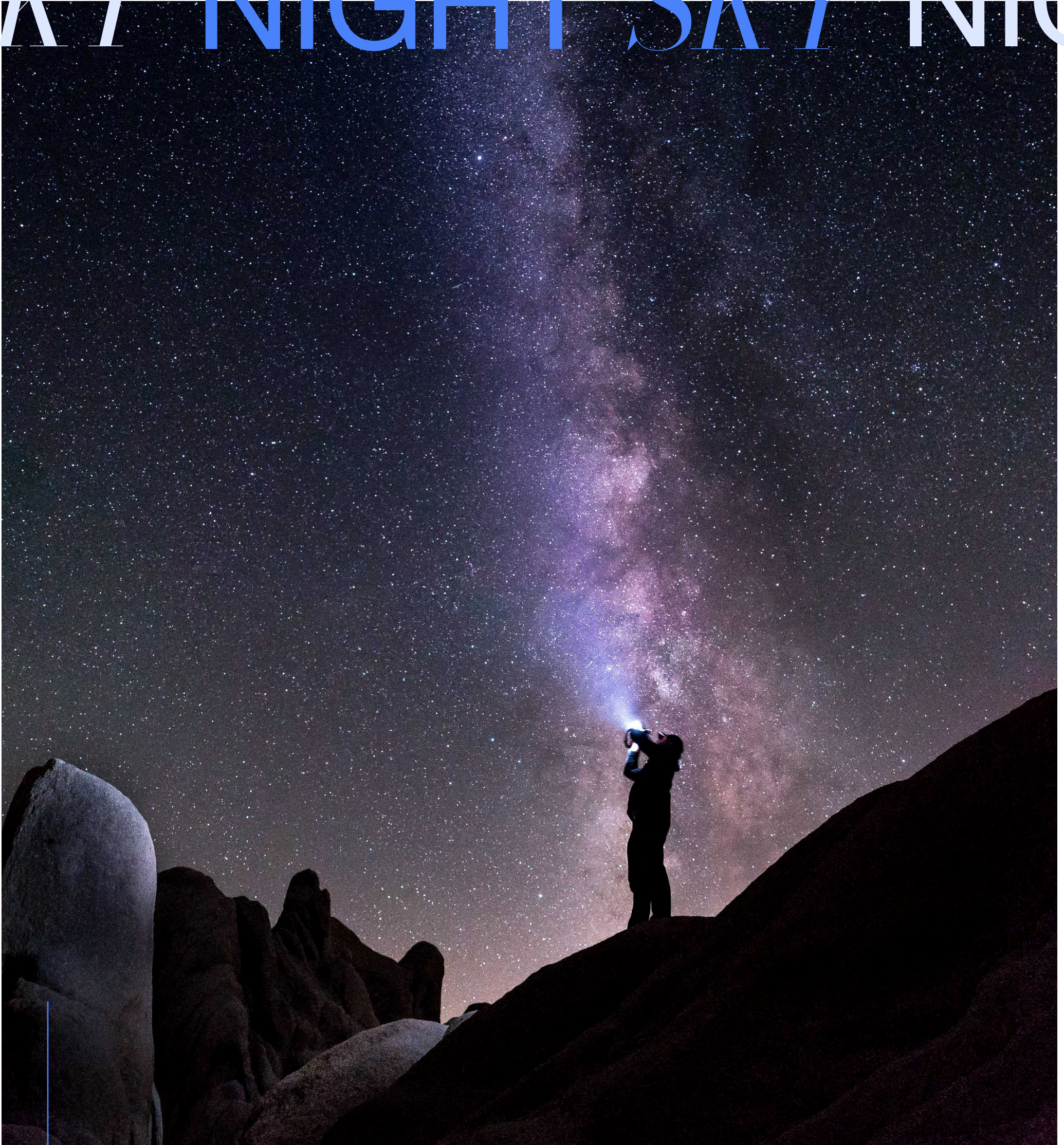
Blue Hour clear day

SKY NIGHT SKY NIGHT



The night sky isn't my preferred, as the contrast can be rather strong. Typically, I find there isn't much detail to capture, which leads me to stop my photography for the day. However, there's a thrill in what we refer to as astronomical skies. This experience involves venturing into the wilderness, away from light pollution, to photograph the sky or the Milky Way. An example of this is the photo I took at Zion National Park in May 2025.

SKY NIGHT SKY NIGHT



Other examples of Milky Way shots
taken in Joshua Tree National Park.

SKY NIGHT SKY NIGHT



The beautiful sky can feature unique weather phenomena, such as the mesmerizing aurora borealis, which I captured while in Iceland.

BLUE HOUR BEFORE SUNRISE



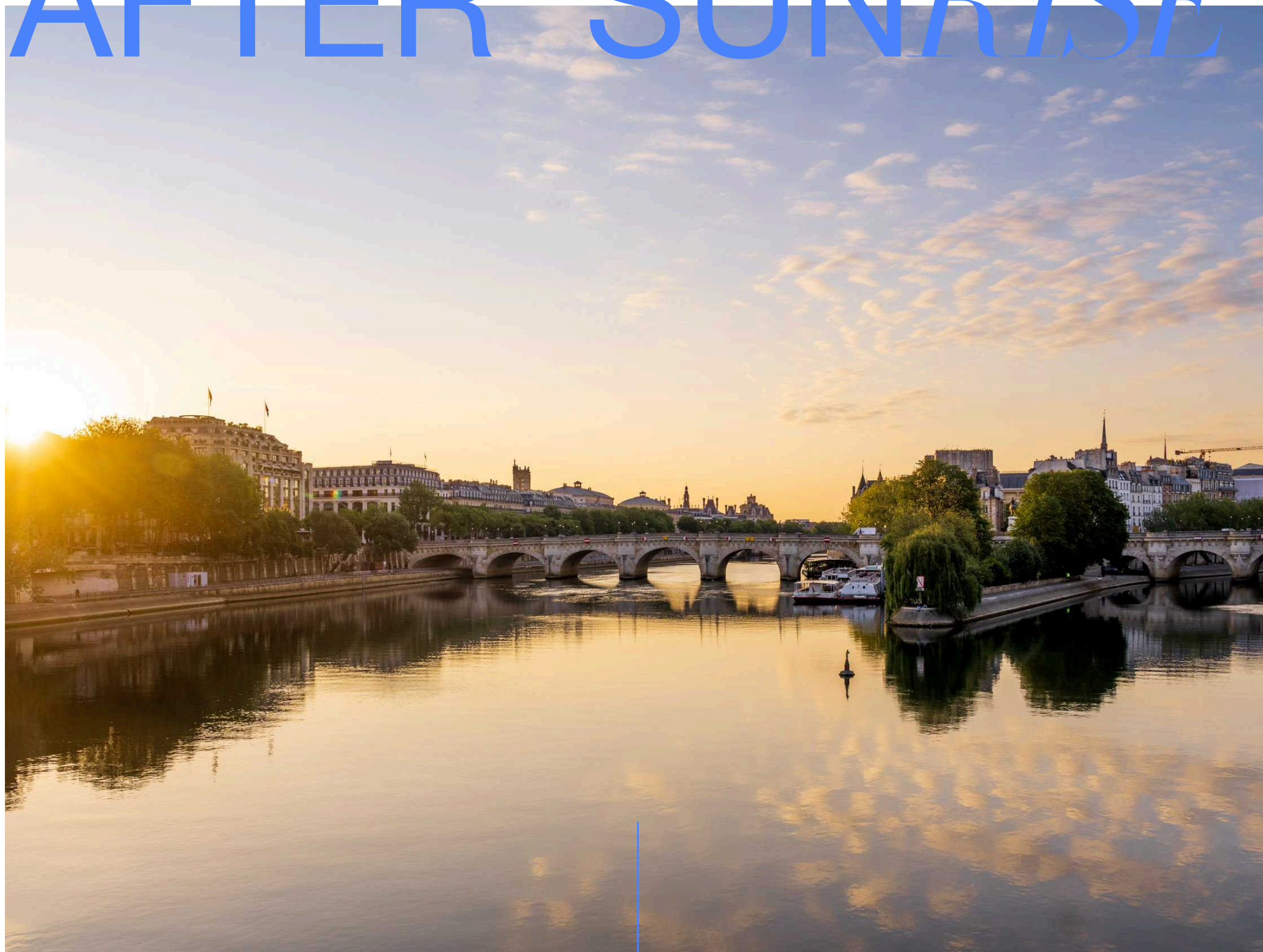
As the cycle begins anew before sunrise, you experience another blue hour. When night fades, the sky turns blue while the city lights remain partially illuminated. I captured this shot at 5:30 a.m., which isn't easy for me since I'm not really a morning person!

SUNRISE



The sunrise closely resembles the sunset, but with far fewer people around since they are still asleep. For instance, I could never have captured this photo without the crowd typically present at sunset. Additionally, during sunset, especially in urban areas, there tends to be more dust and particles in the air, which can enhance the intensity of the colors.

GOLDEN HOUR AFTER SUNRISE



As the cycle begins anew before sunrise, you experience another blue hour. When night fades, the sky turns blue while the city lights remain partially illuminated. I captured this shot at 5:30 a.m., which isn't easy for me since I'm not really a morning person!

3 DEADLY SINS WHAT NOT *TO* DO *IN* SKY REPLACEMENT

DEADLY SIN #1 WRONG *TIME* SKY



When the sky is not as you hope it is, it is very tempting to change it. This was shot at the blue hour, which is after sunset.

DEADLY SIN #1 *WRONG TIME SKY*



If I put a sky of a sunset, something is wrong. In real life, the scene would be much more balanced; it would be backlit, and the buildings should be more washed out. The building lights would not be on. This sky is too early; we need to replace it with a sky taken at the same time but better!



This is a blue hour sky that has been replaced, aligning perfectly with the time. Occasionally, if certain types of clouds are present, they can take on a magenta hue during the blue hour.

DEADLY SIN #1 *WRONG TIME SKY*



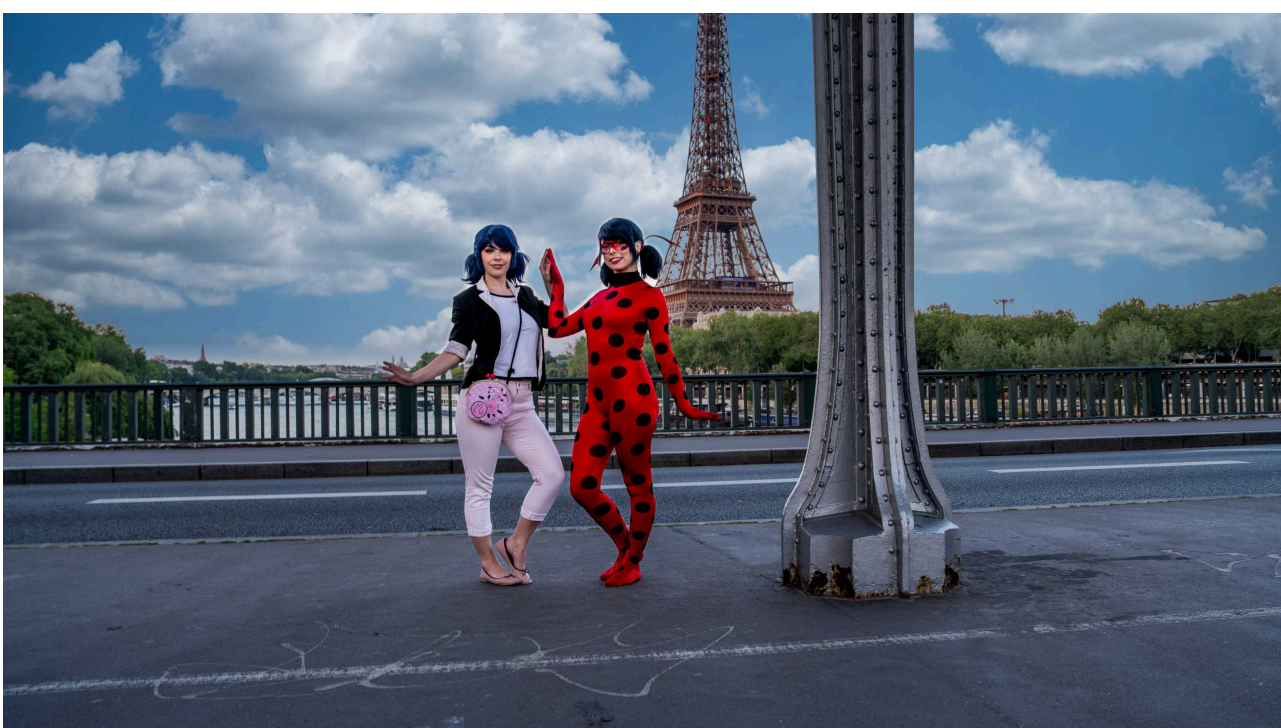
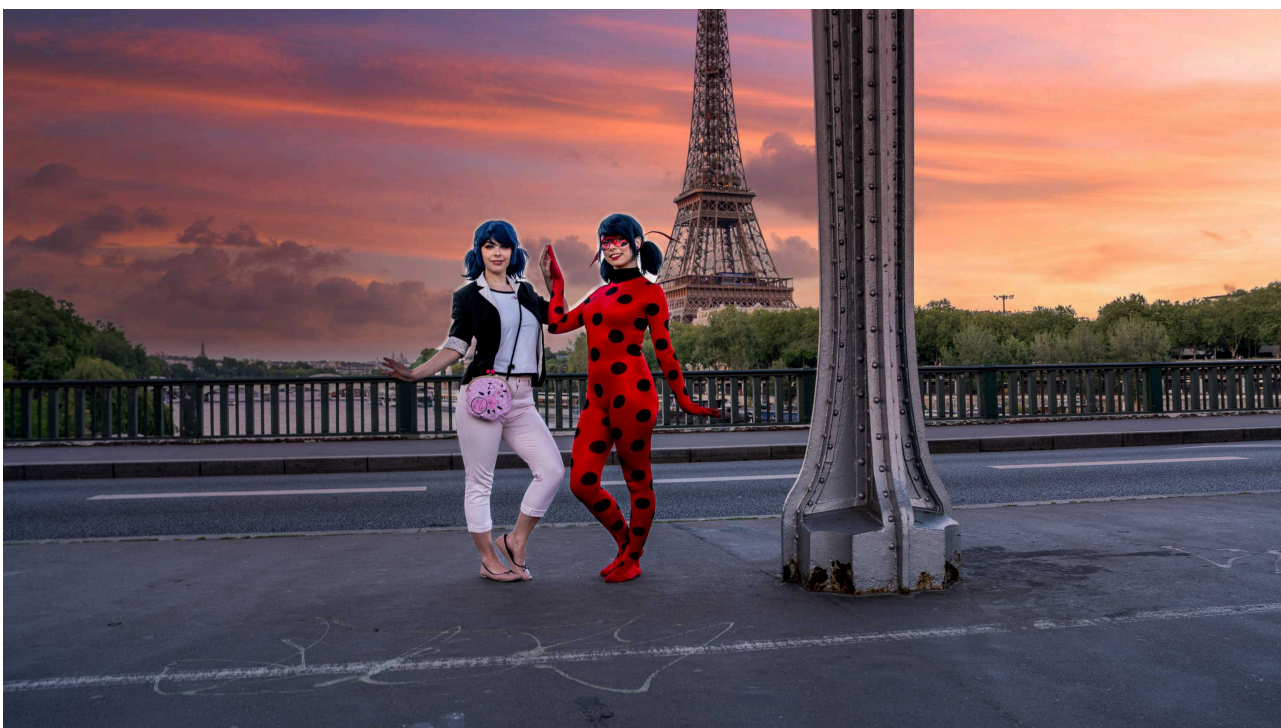
This is another mistake; the photo was taken in the afternoon, and adding a sunset doesn't align with reality. In a genuine sunset, you wouldn't see strong shadows in the foreground; instead, it would appear completely dark. Viewers will instinctively sense that something is off, even if they can't quite articulate it!



DEADLY SIN #1 *WRONG TIME SKY*



Another example: the original sky appeared dull, and adding a sunset didn't quite fit; in reality, the girls would look much darker. I replaced the sky with a beautiful, bright daylight sky, and now it looks much better. The key rule is to swap the sky with a shot taken around the same time but with a more appealing appearance!



DEADLY SIN #1 *WRONG TIME SKY*



Sunrise Tunnel View in Yosemite

During my visit to Tunnel View in Yosemite for sunrise, I found then I got a very dull sunrise. The sun was still low on the horizon when I shot this. If I were to replace the scene with a sky where the sun is higher than the mountains, it wouldn't make sense, as it would light up parts of the valley. However, if I choose a sky where the sun is still low and the clouds are illuminated from that position, it creates a more compelling image.

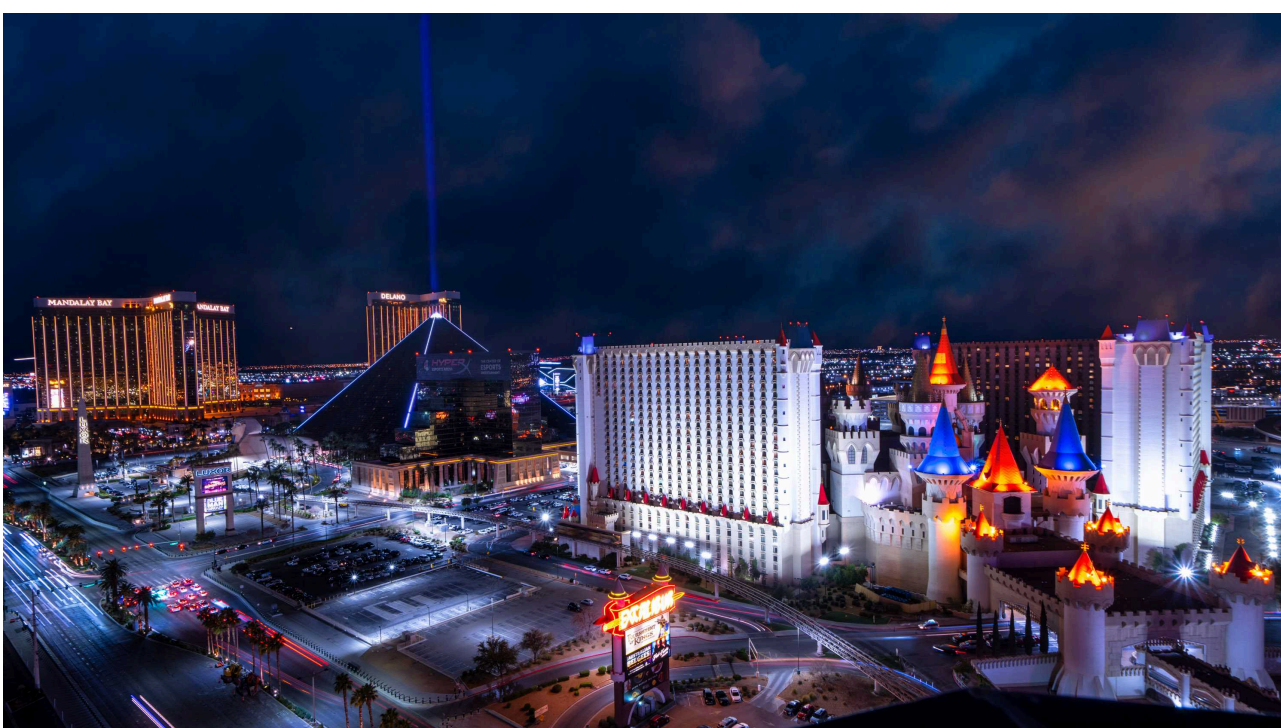


DEADLY SIN #1 *WRONG TIME SKY*



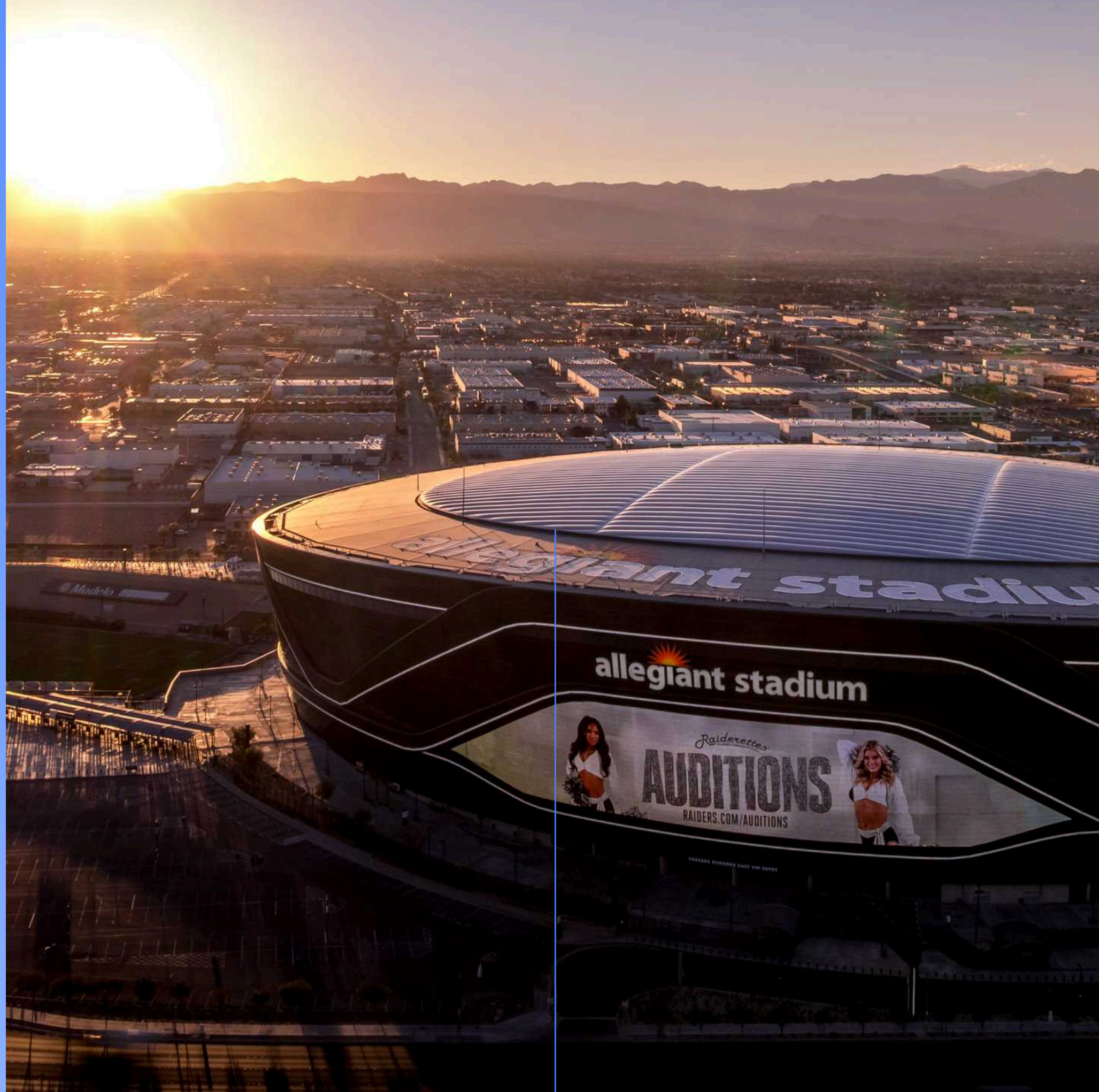
The Las Vegas Night Sky

Changing the night sky to reflect a sunset doesn't quite work; it creates an odd contrast with the city lights. Instead, you could opt for a night sky filled with clouds. While this may not make a significant difference, at least it maintains a sense of accuracy.



DEADLY SIN #2

WRONG *POSITION* OF THE SUN

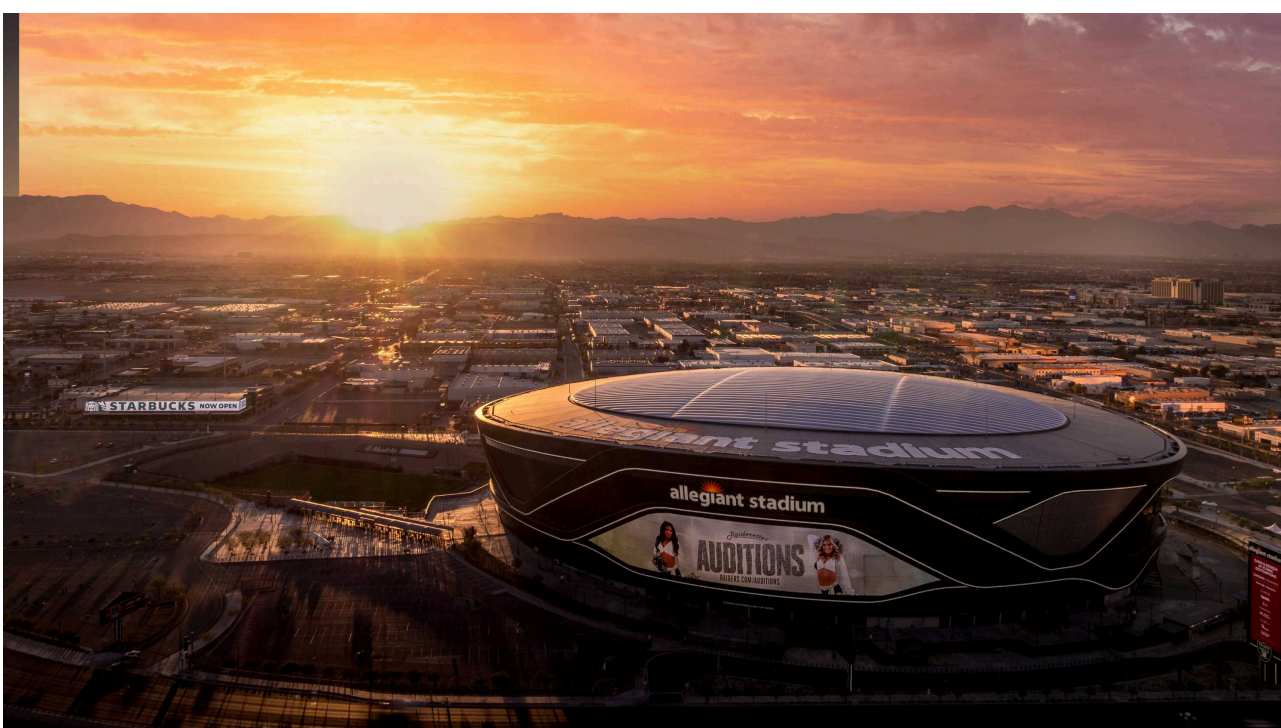
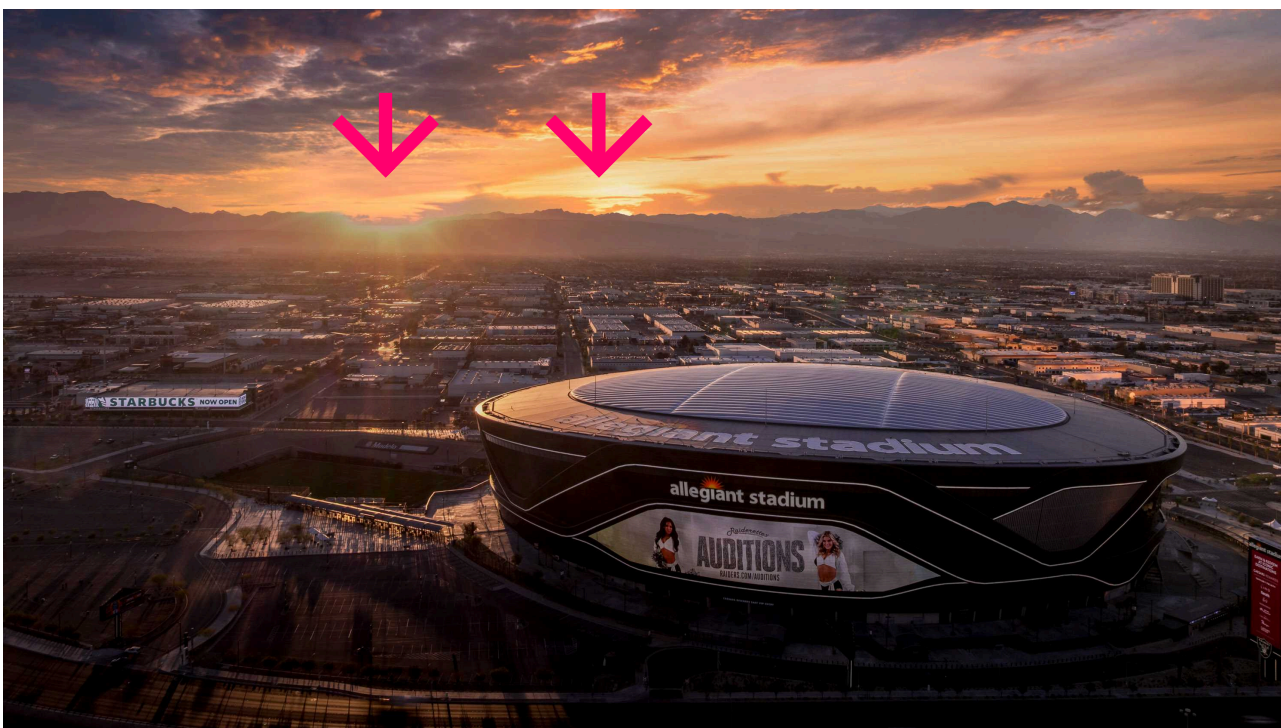


DEADLY SIN #2 *WRONG POSITION OF THE SUN*



It's evident that there are two suns; while the replaced sunset is beautiful and improved, having two suns does not work well, even if it's not very noticeable.

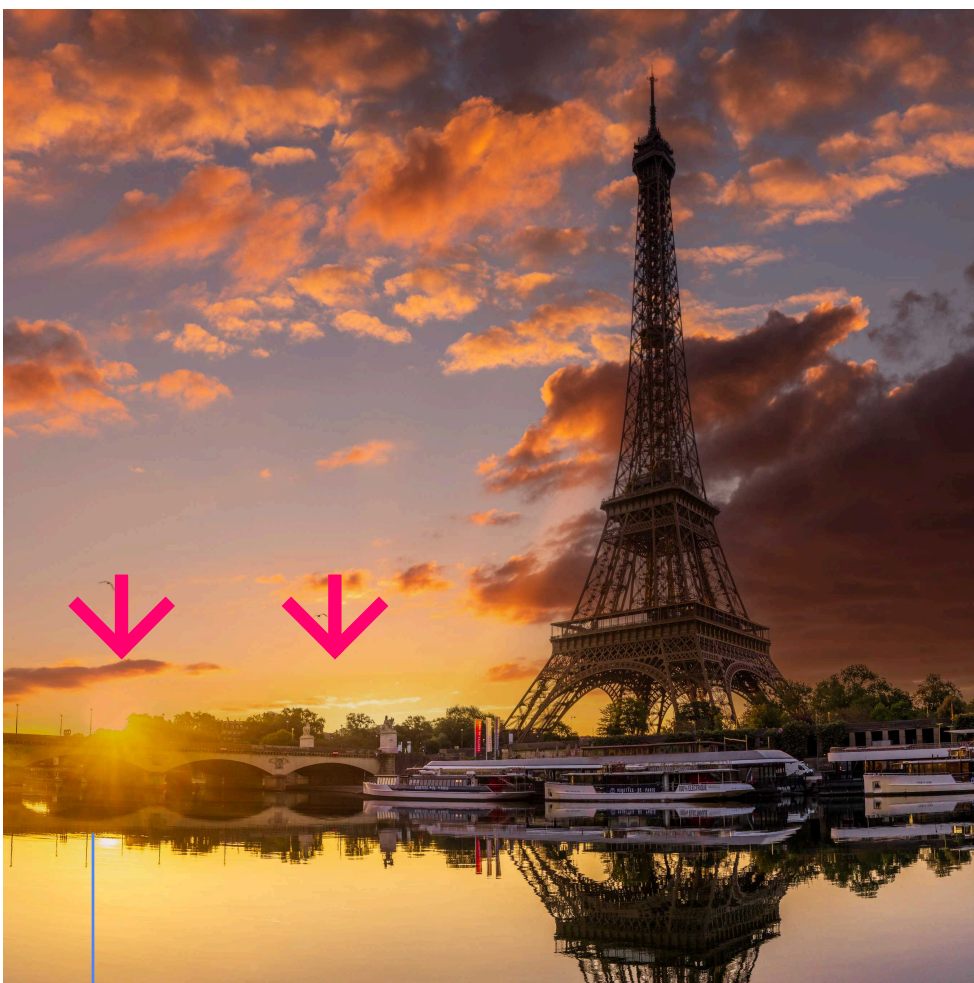
Now I took a sky and moved the sun around to make it match the other original sun position much more naturally. I was hired by the Mayor's office of Las Vegas to do drone photography of the city.



DEADLY SIN #2 *WRONG POSITION OF THE SUN*



Ah beautiful sunrise in Paris but no clouds!



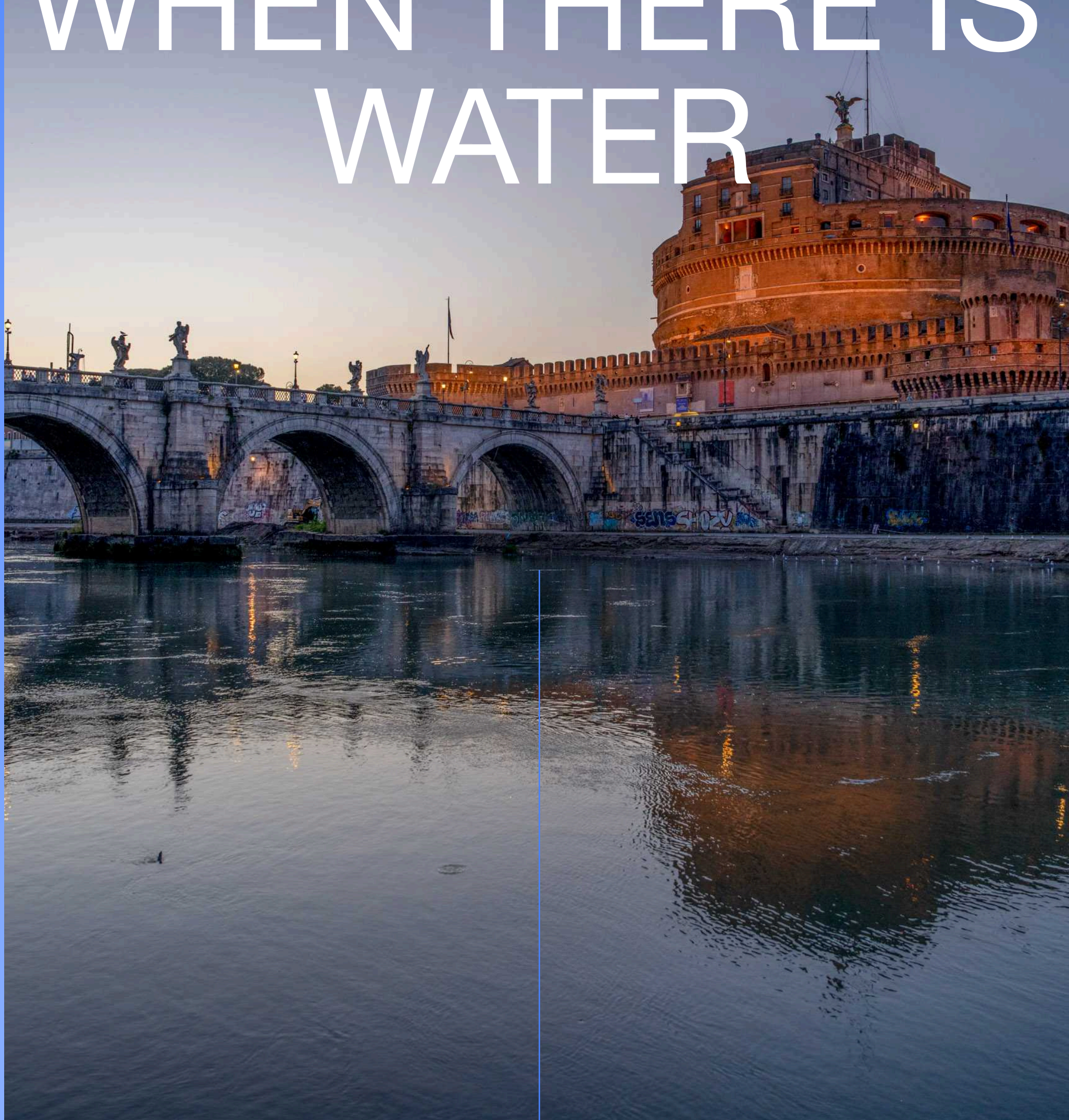
It's clear from the photo that there are two suns, which isn't a natural occurrence; we're not on Tatooine!



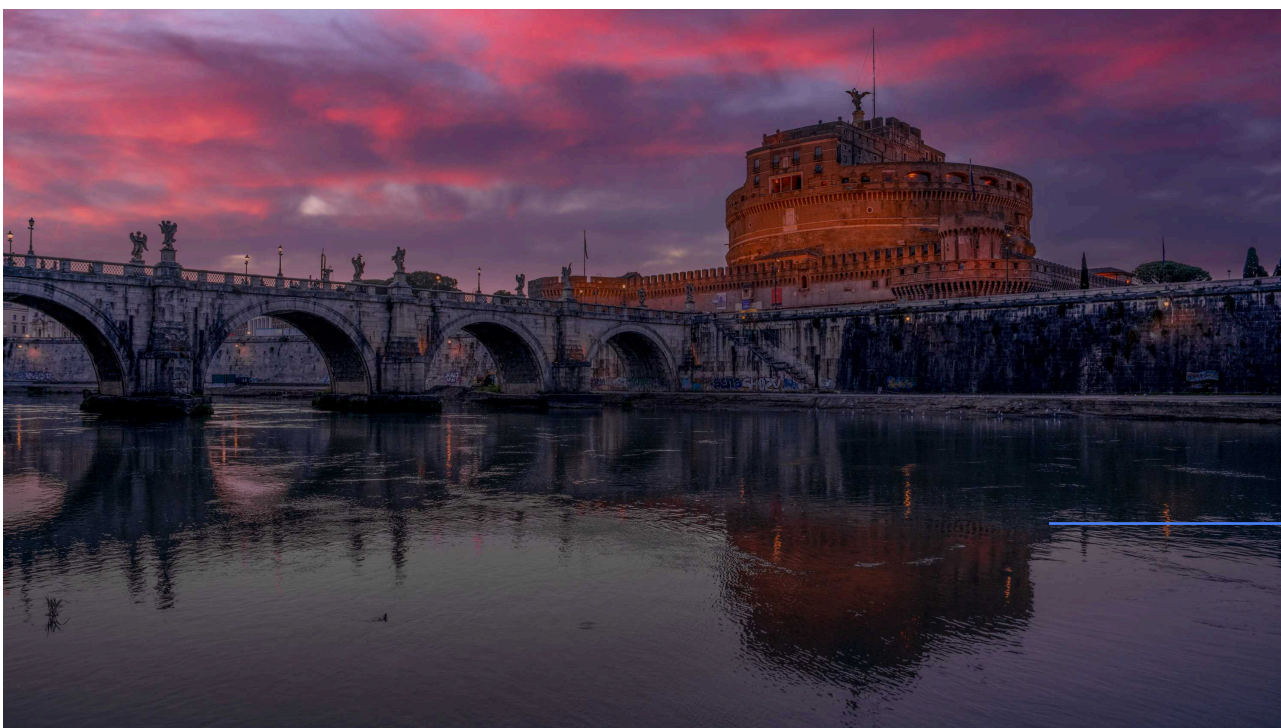
Here is the new sky has a sun but it is perfectly aligned

DEADLY SIN #3

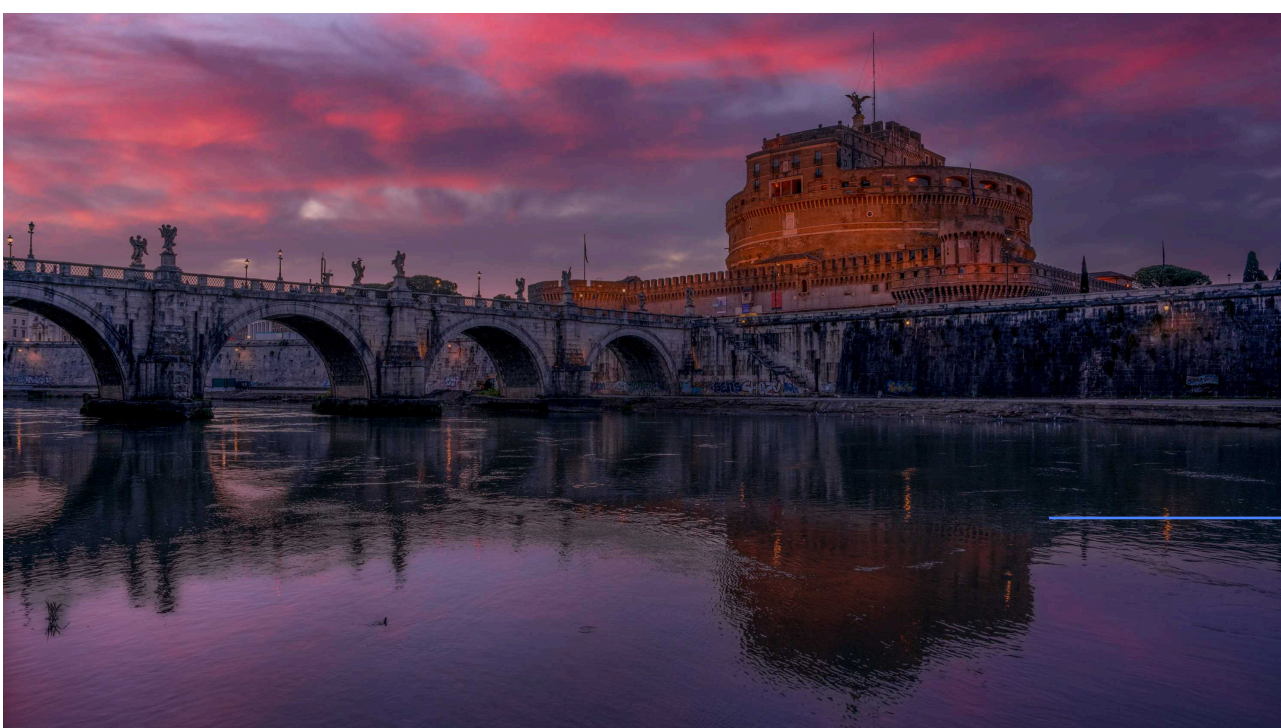
NO *REFLECTION* WHEN THERE IS WATER



DEADLY SIN #3 *NO REFLECTION WHEN THERE IS WATER*

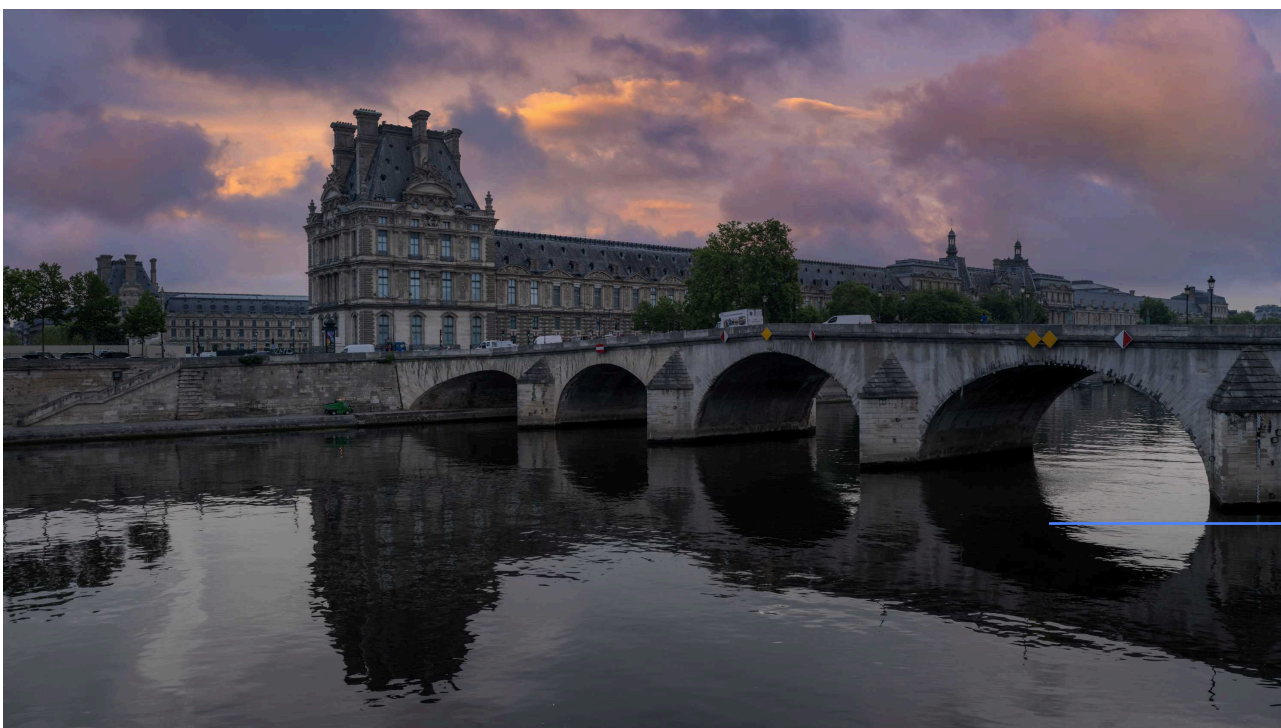


No reflection

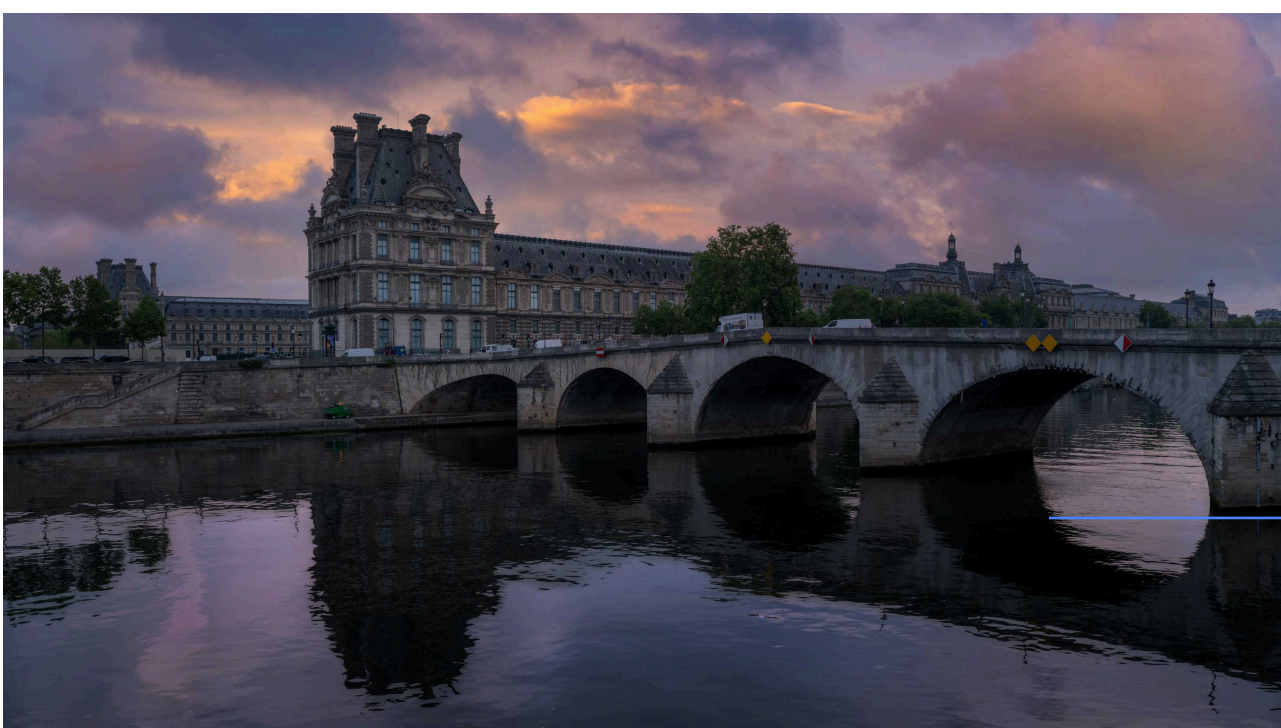


With reflection

DEADLY SIN #3 *NO REFLECTION WHEN THERE IS WATER*



No reflection



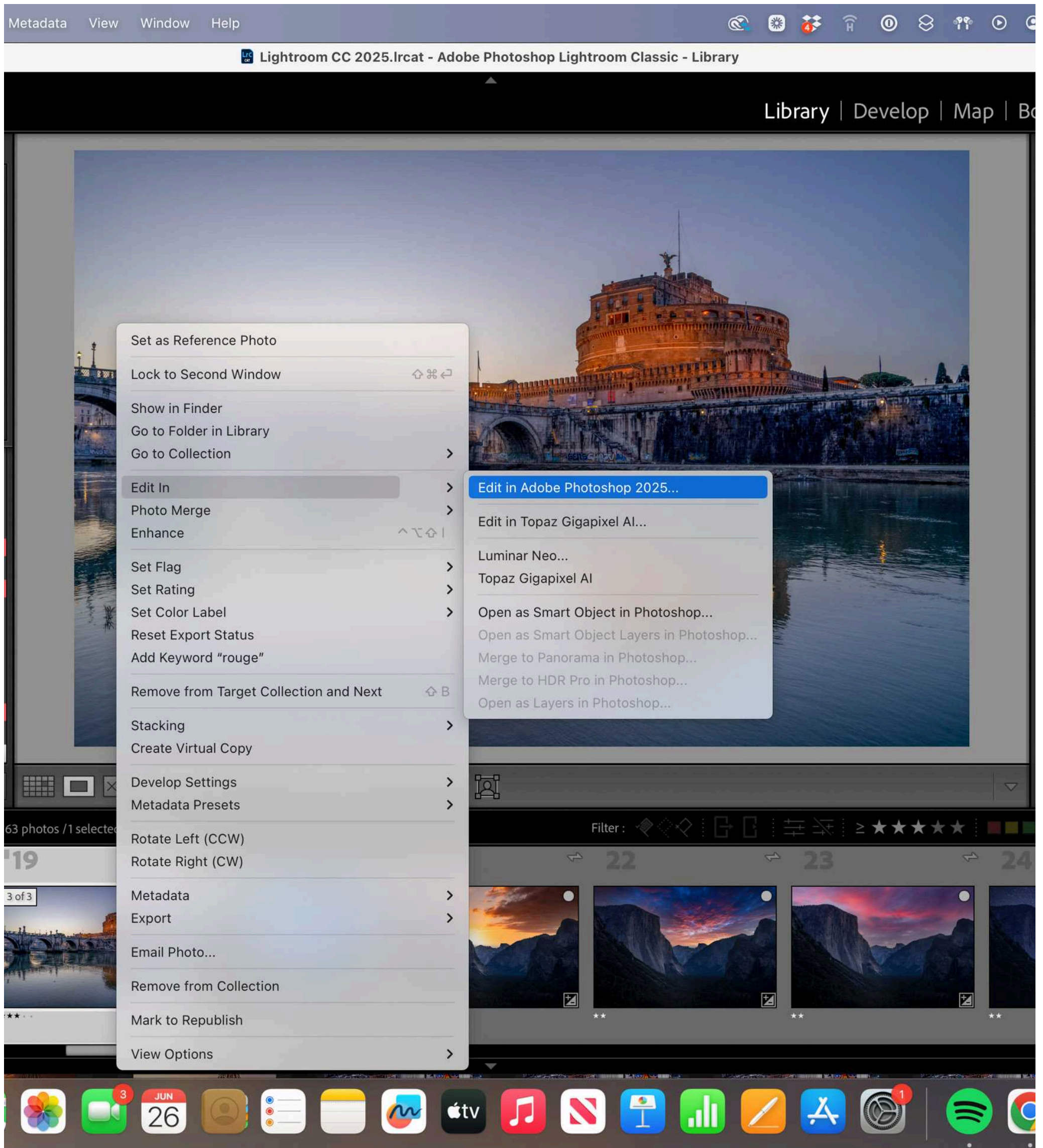
With reflection

THE STABLE DATA IS:
REPLACE YOUR
DULL SKY WITH
ONE TAKEN *AT THE*
SAME TIME—BUT
WAY MORE EPIC

HOW *TO* REPLACE YOUR SKY IN PHOTOSHOP, INCLUDING ADDING SKIES *AND* REFLECTIONS

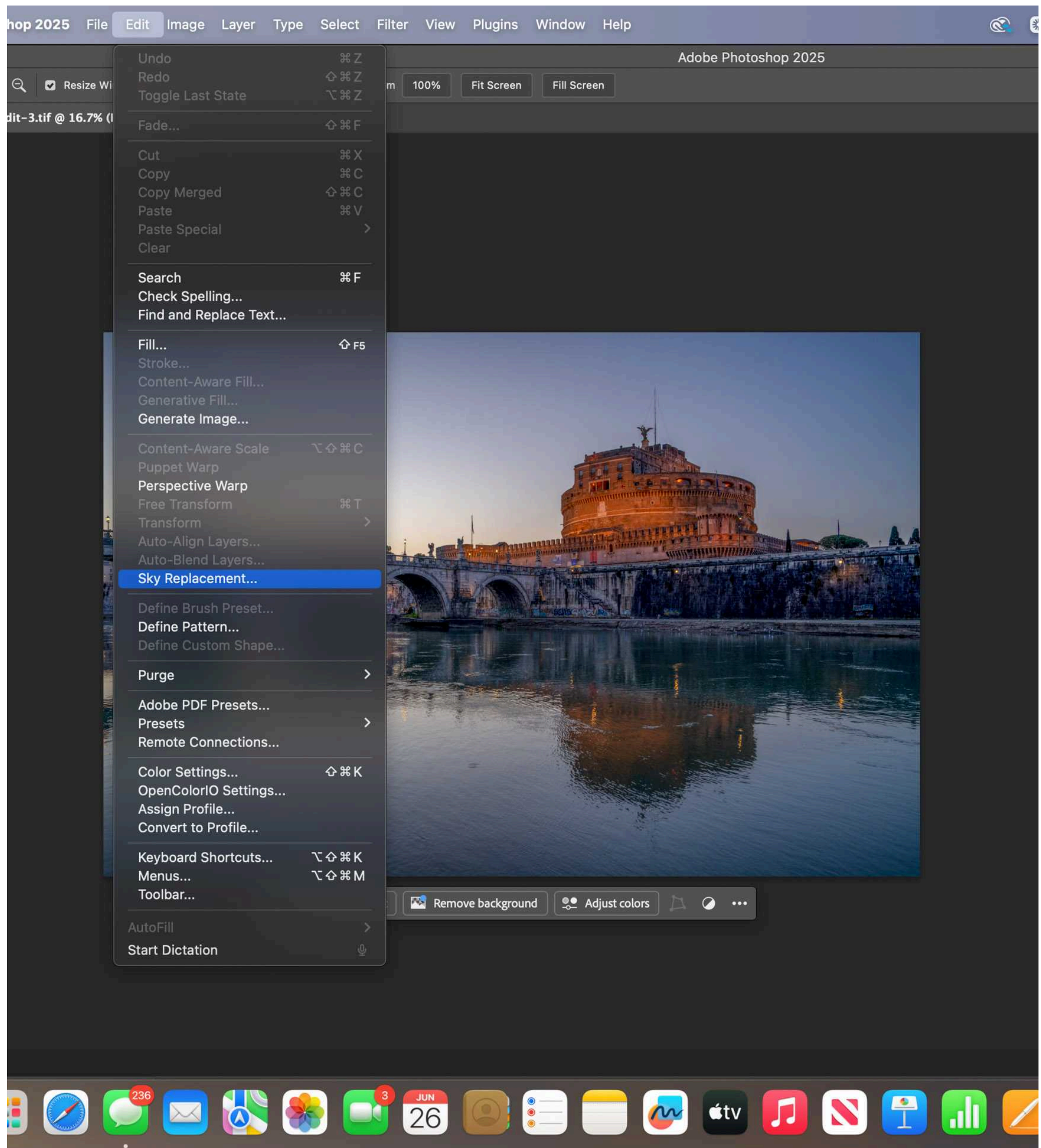
STEP 1

From Lightroom Classic open Photo in Photoshop

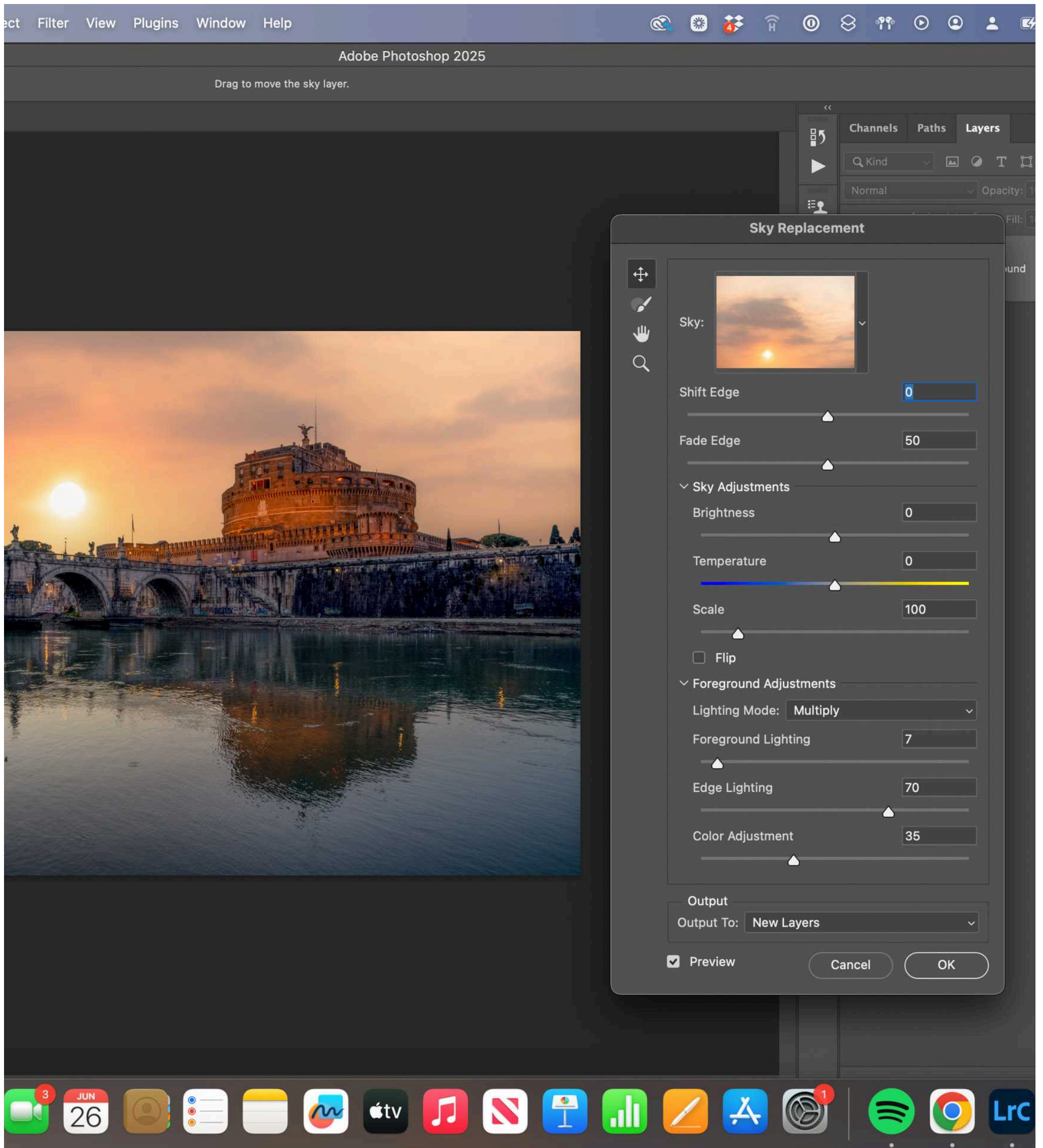


STEP 2

In the menu go to
Edit → Sky replacement

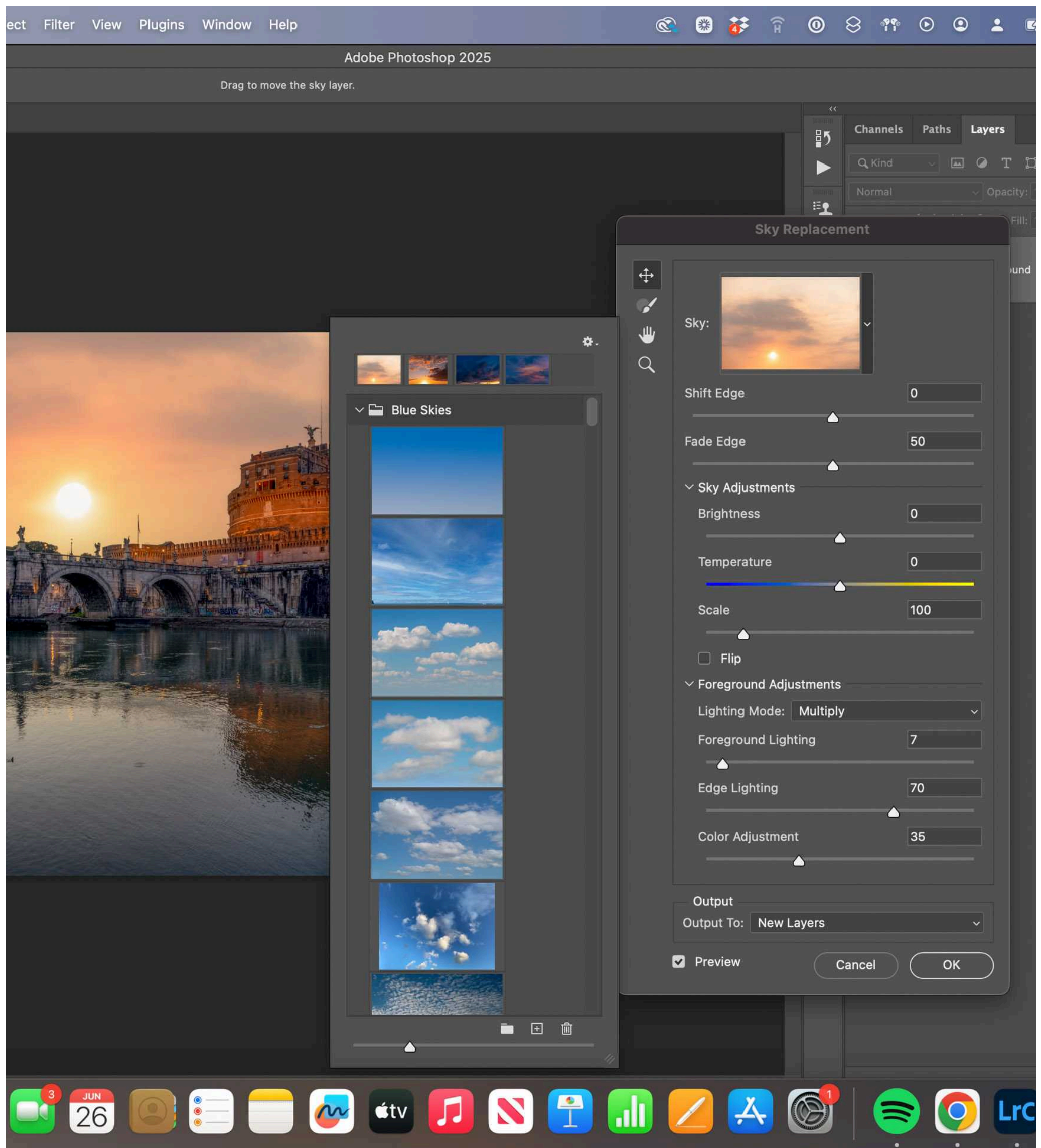


STEP 2
Default the last sky
you used will be there



STEP 3

Click on the sky and it will open a new window with some skies

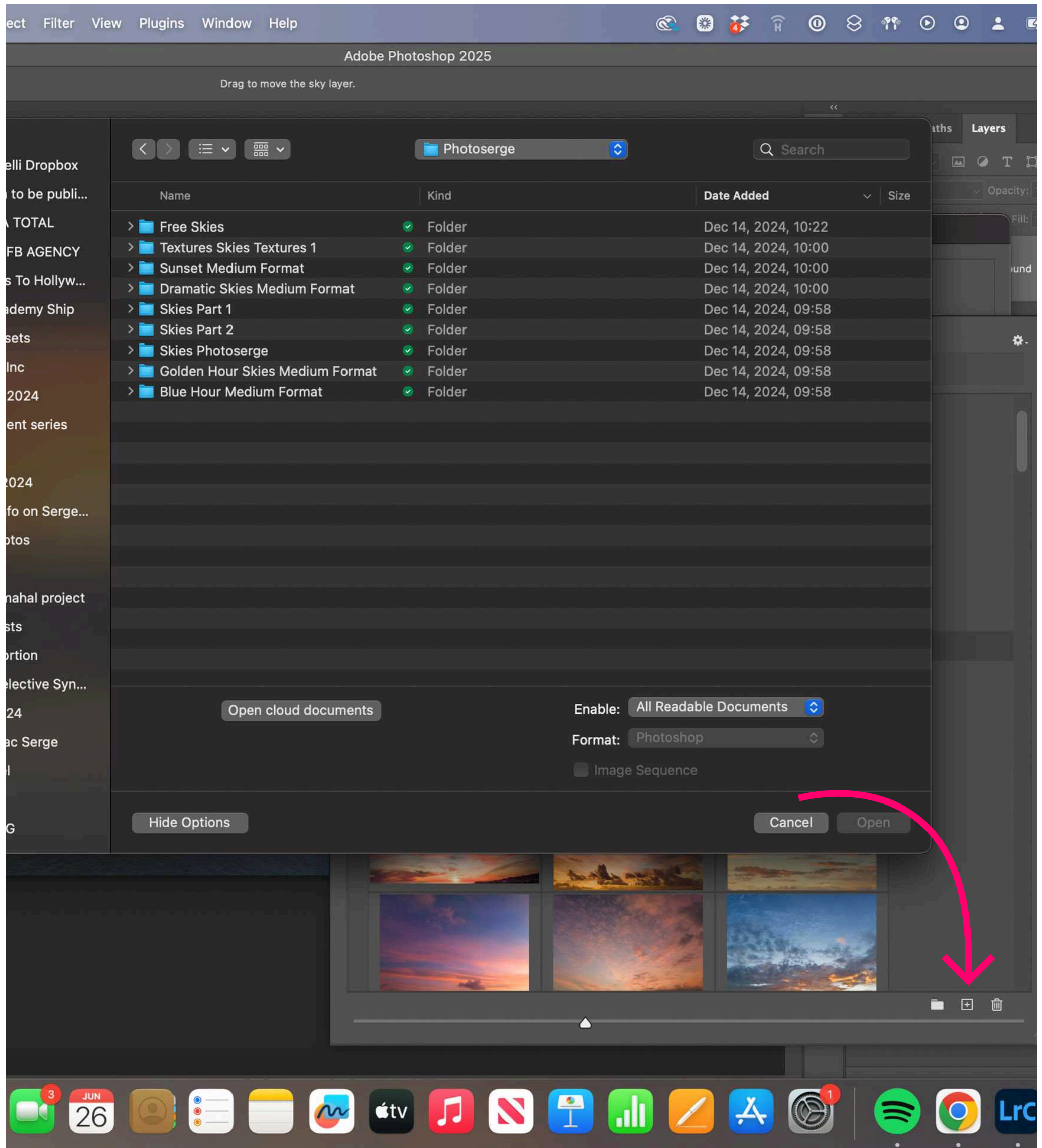


Increase the size of your window and the size of the skies so you can see better



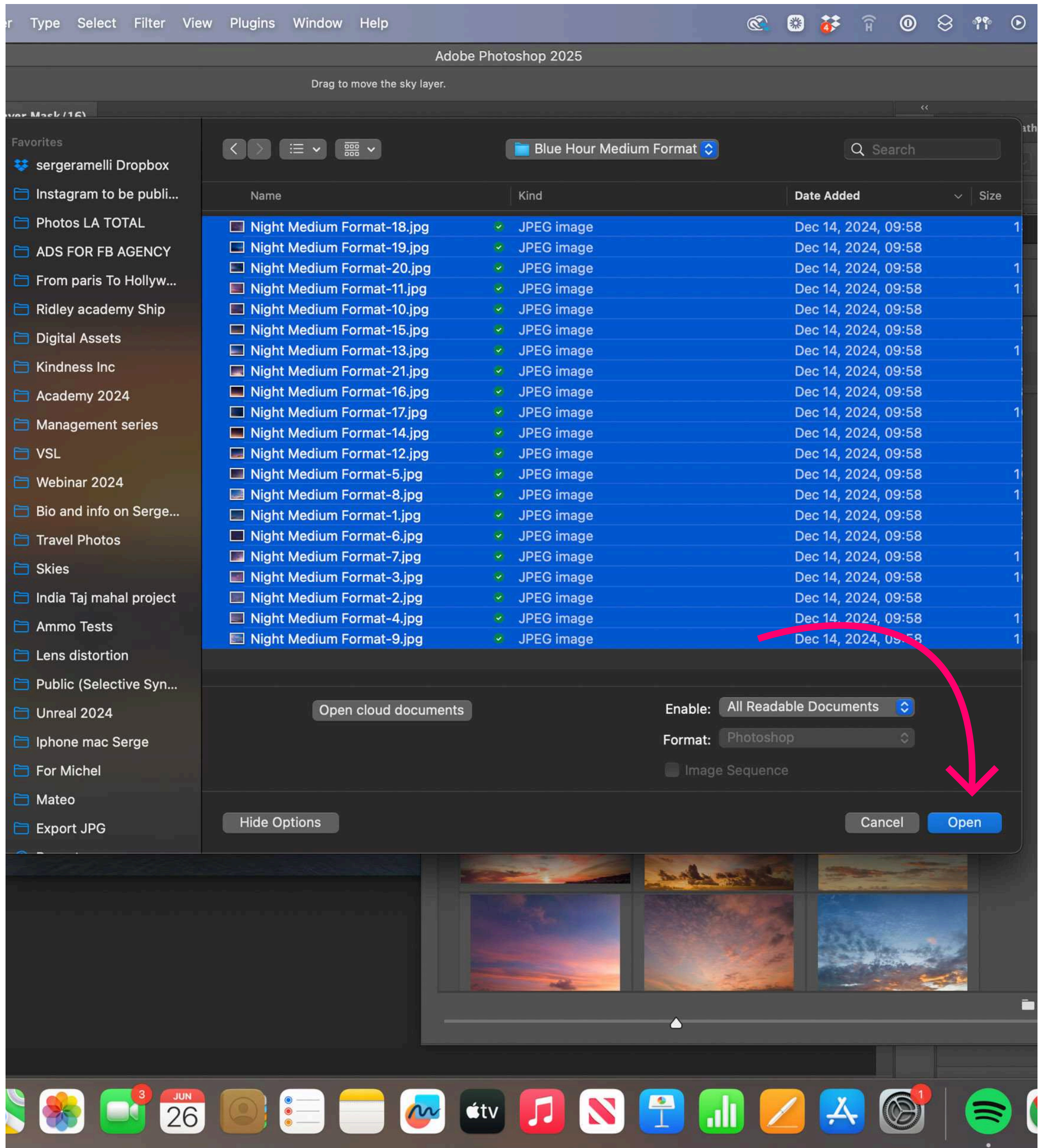
STEP 5

Optional: If you have new skies to add, click on the [+]



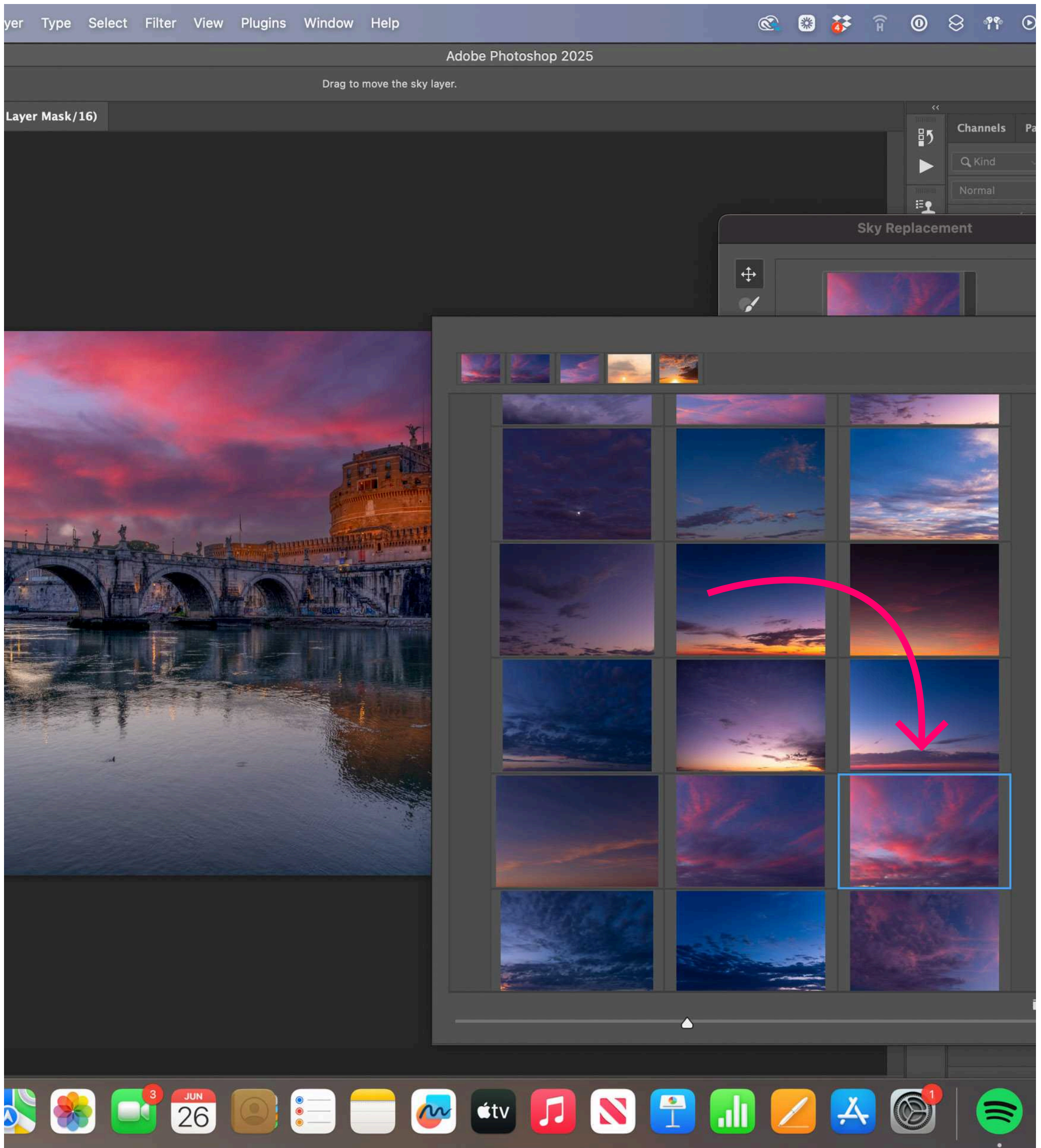
STEP 6

Select all the skies you want to add;
you can press CTRL A to select all.



STEP 6

All your skies will now be forever
in your photoshop



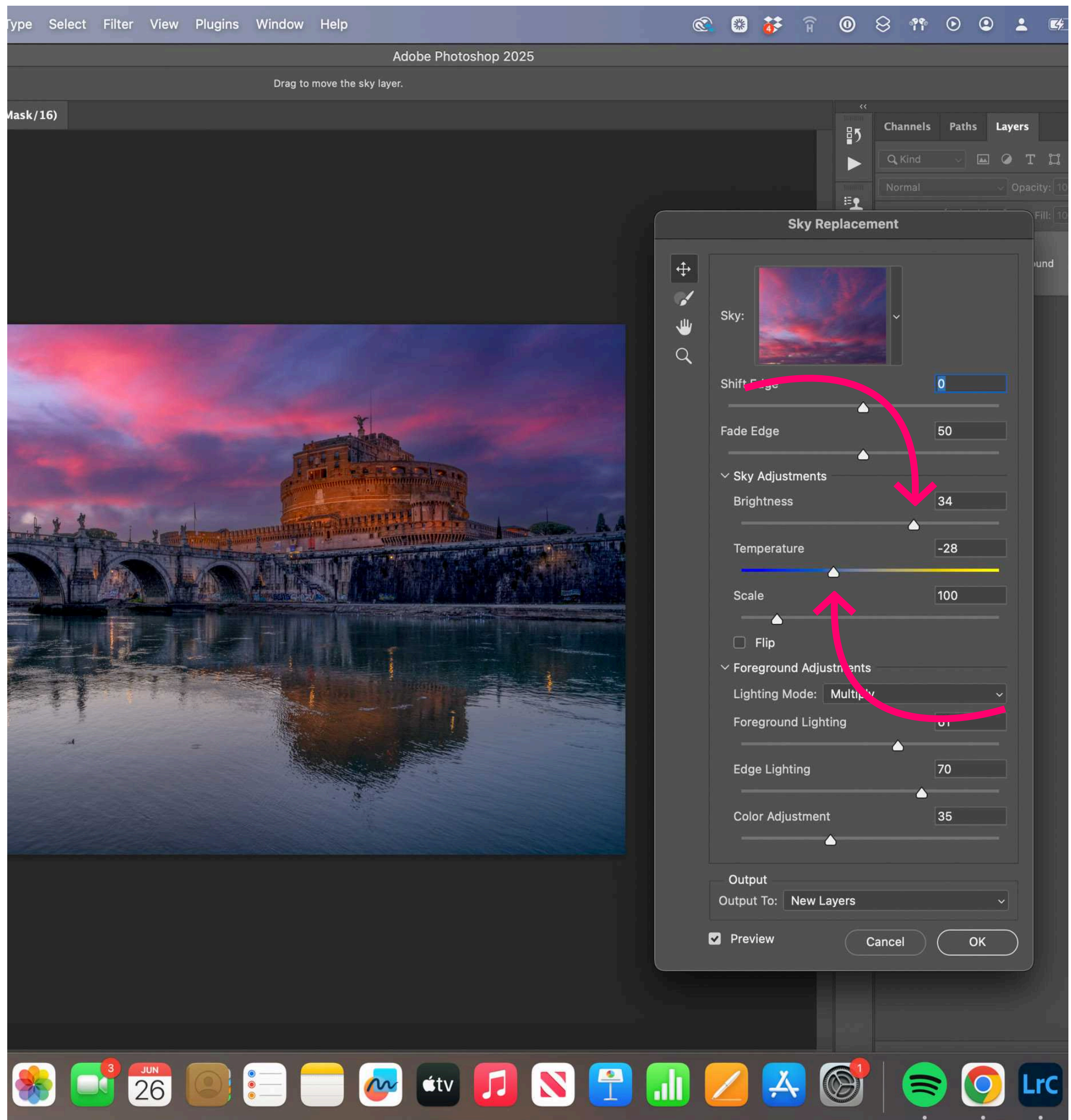
IF YOU'RE IN NEED OF SKIES,
YOU CAN BUY *MY* TOP FLORIDA
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PHOTOSERGE.ME/SKIES

Don't forget to use
the coupon code: **WELCOME**
at checkout to receive a 50% discount
on the release price. It may or may
not work, but if it does, be sure
to take advantage of it!

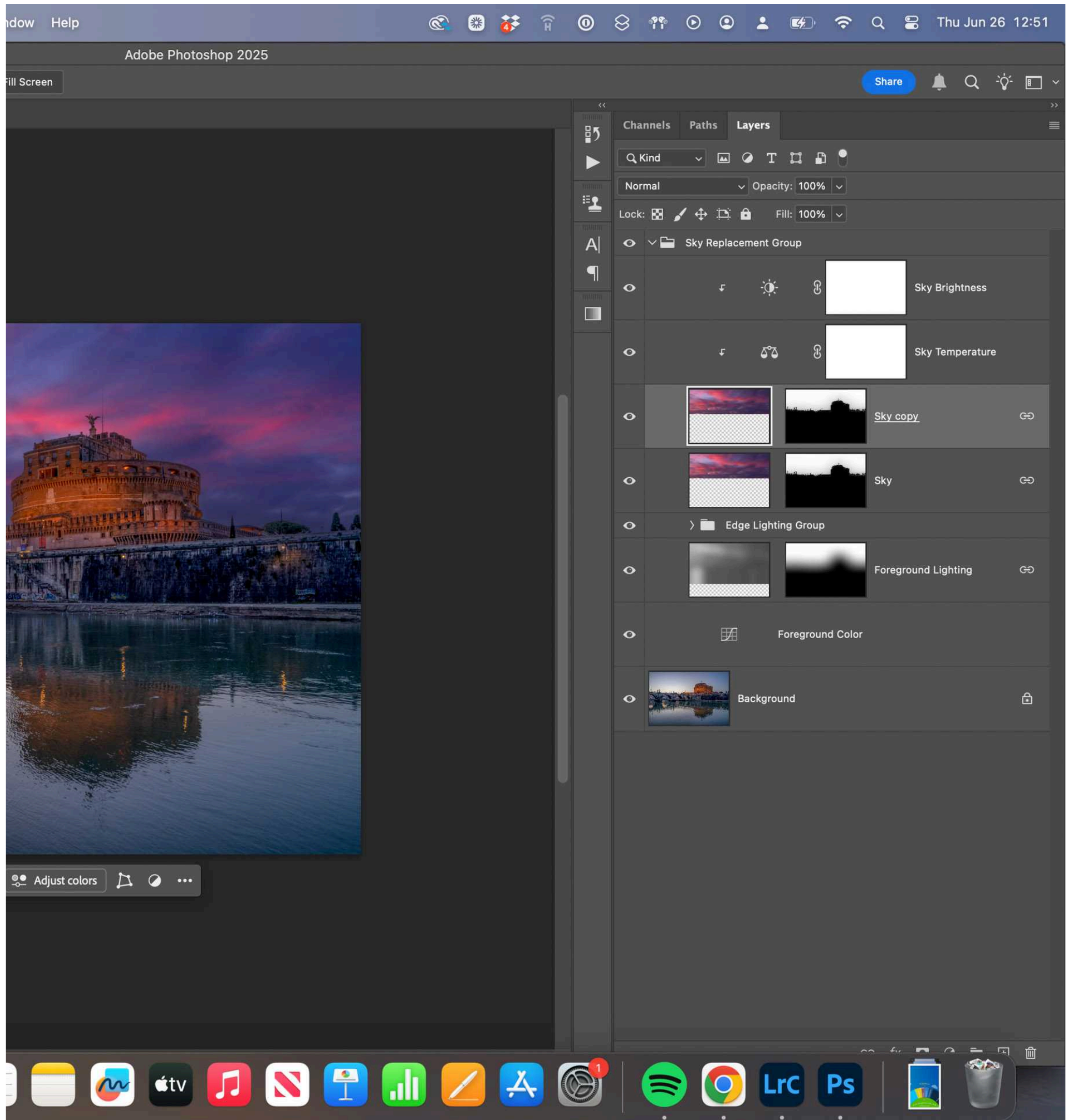
STEP 7

Pick a sky that was **TAKEN** at the same time but **BETTER** and you can adjust the brightness and the temperature to match your image



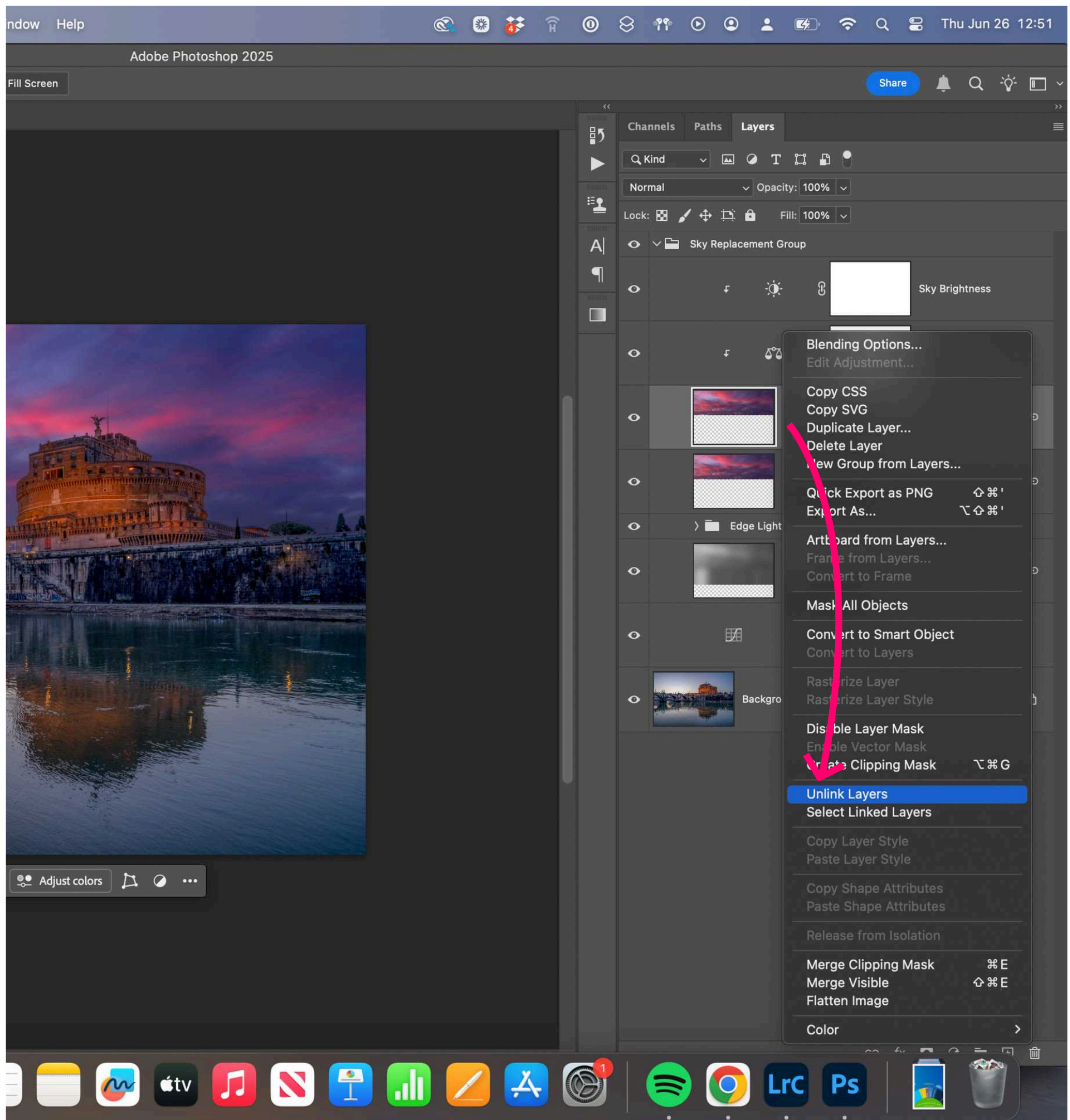
STEP 8

To add reflections, select the sky layer and press **COMMAND J** on a Mac or **CTRL J** on a PC to duplicate it.



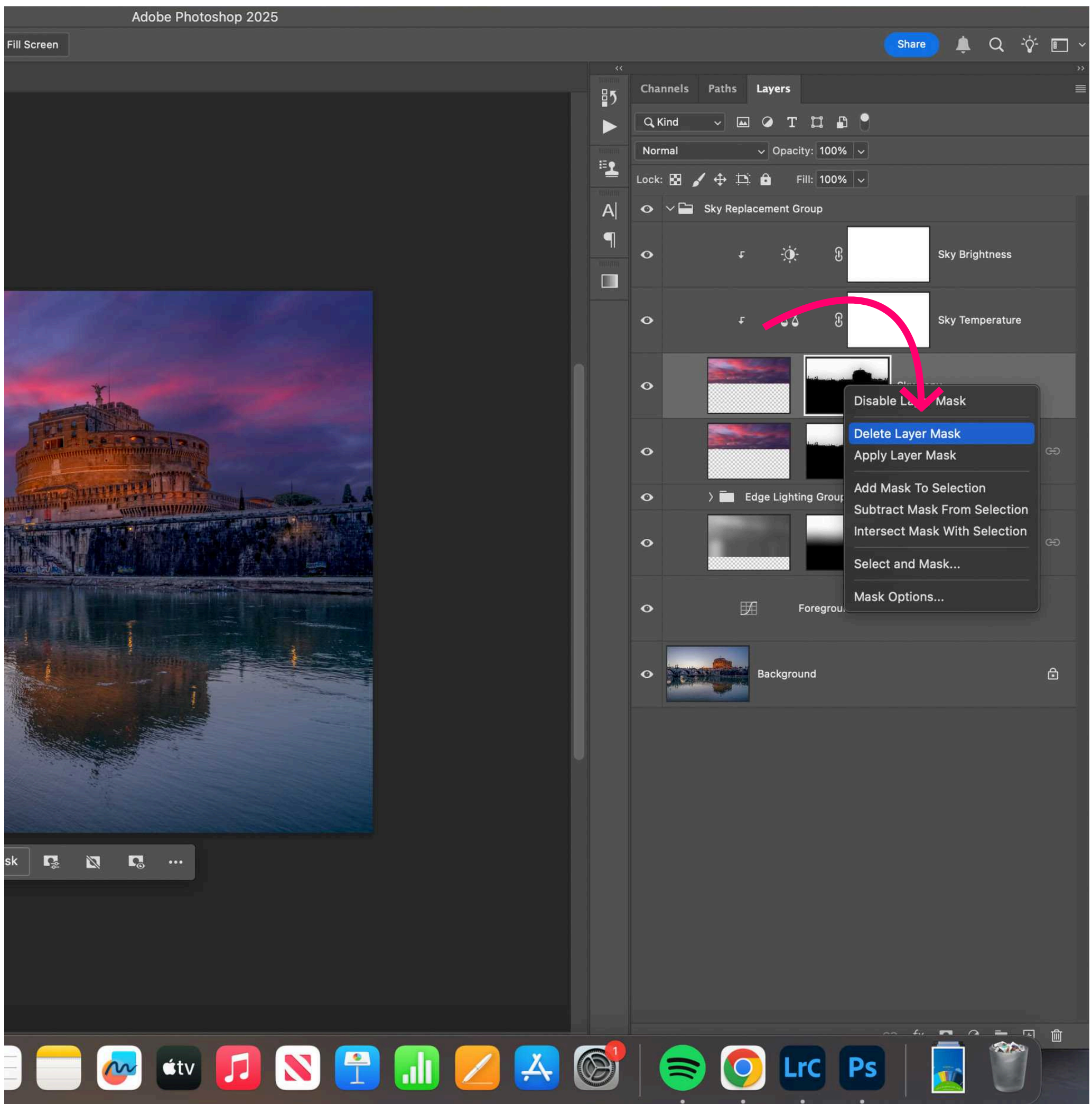
STEP 9

Then, right-click on the sky and select "Unlink Layers." This will ensure that they are independent from each other.



STEP 10

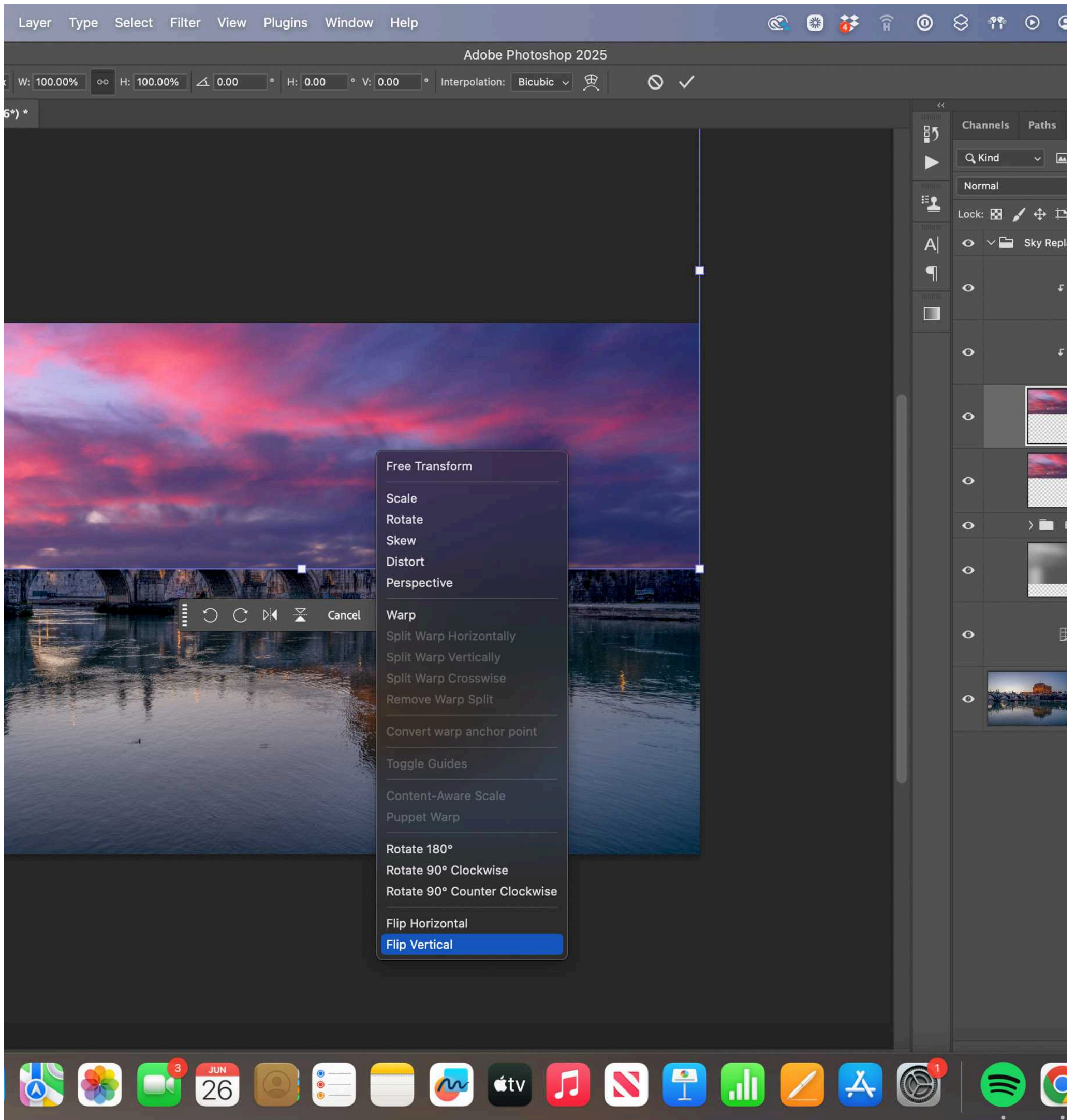
Next, right-click on the sky mask and choose "Delete Layer Mask." This mask applies solely to the sky; however, we will utilize that sky for reflections.



STEP II

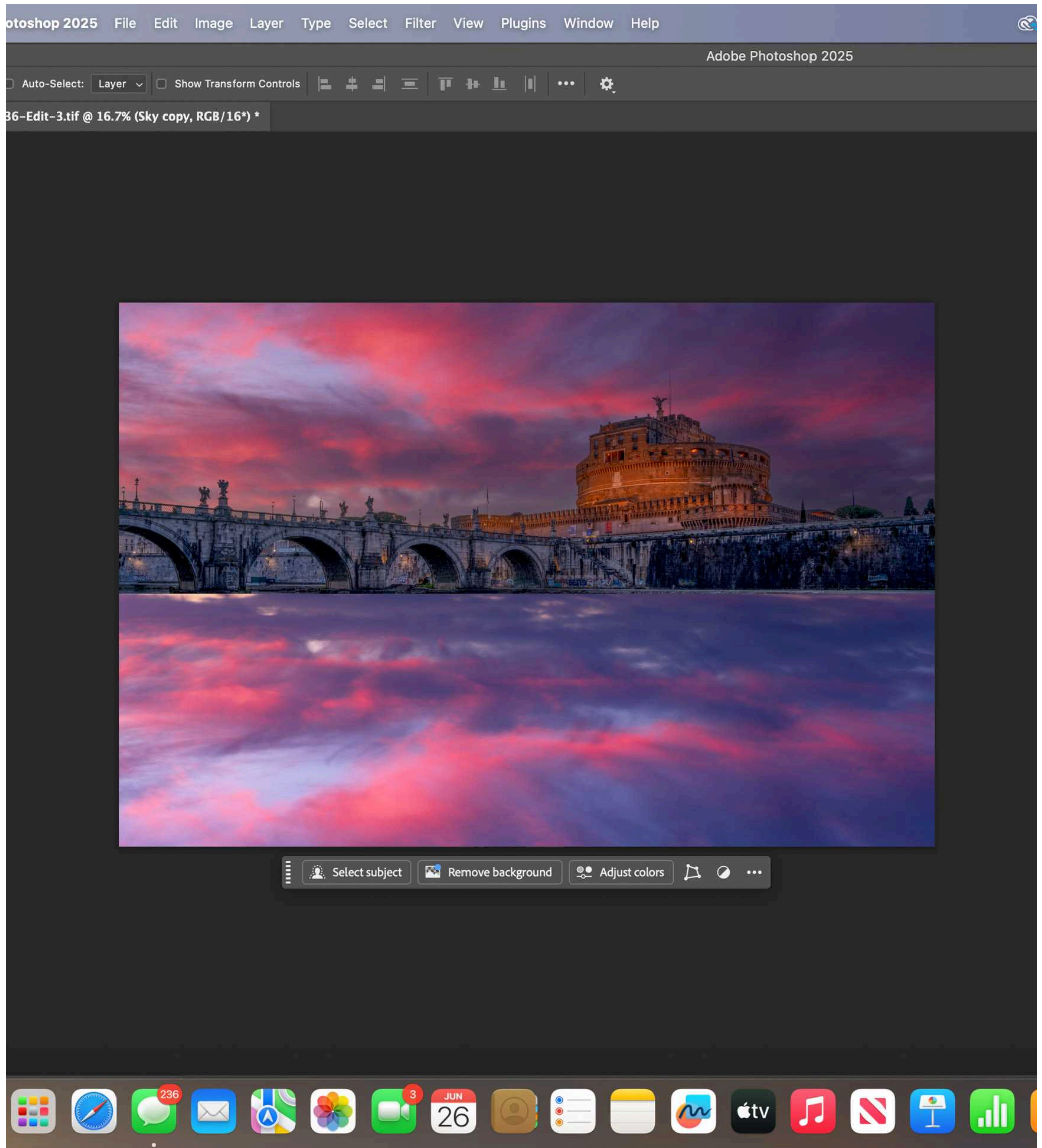
Select the sky layer, then press COMMAND T on Mac or CTRL T on Windows.

Next, right-click and choose "Flip Vertical."



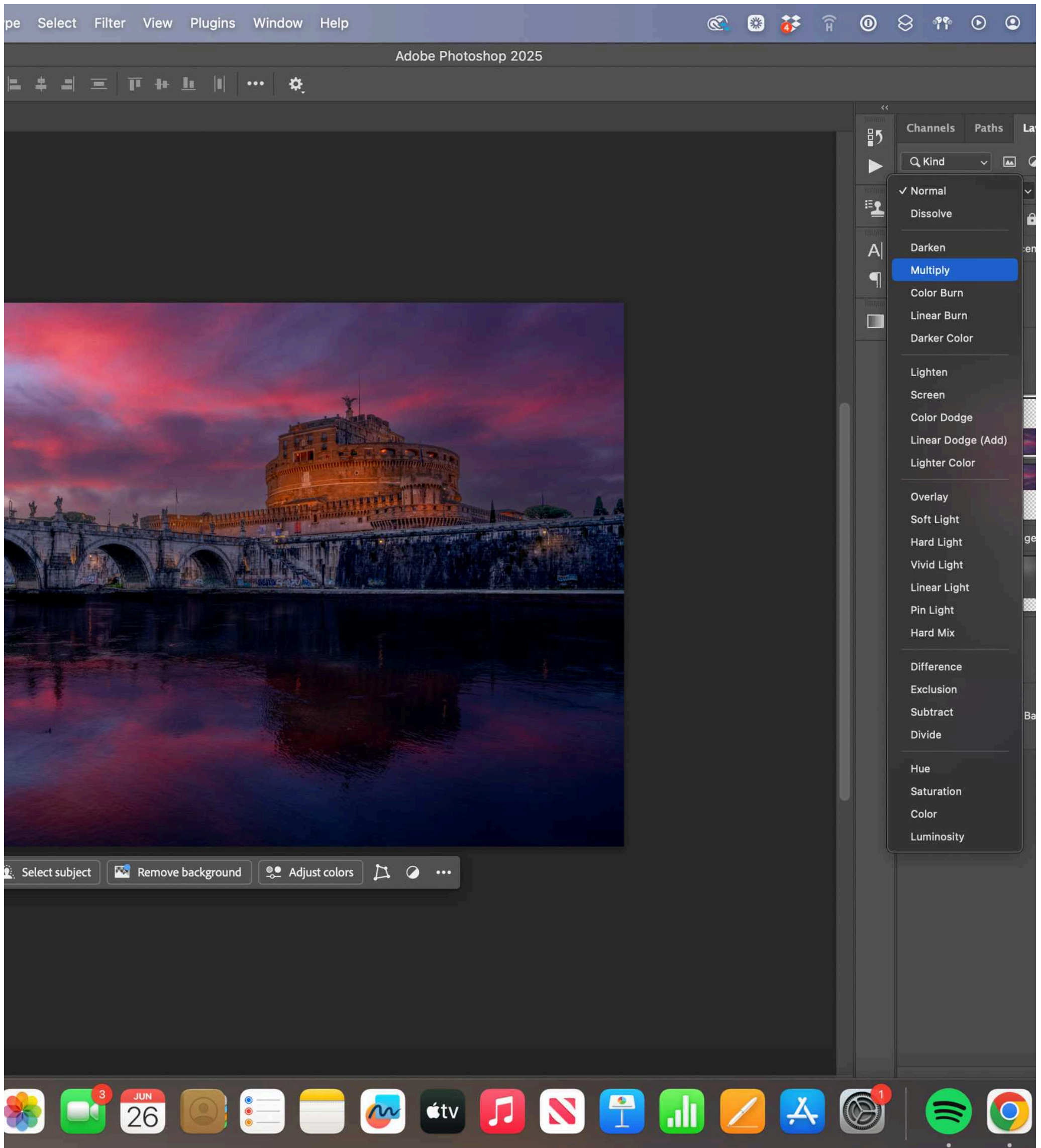
STEP 12

While pressing shift, drag the sky over the water
now it has been flipped and mirrors the top



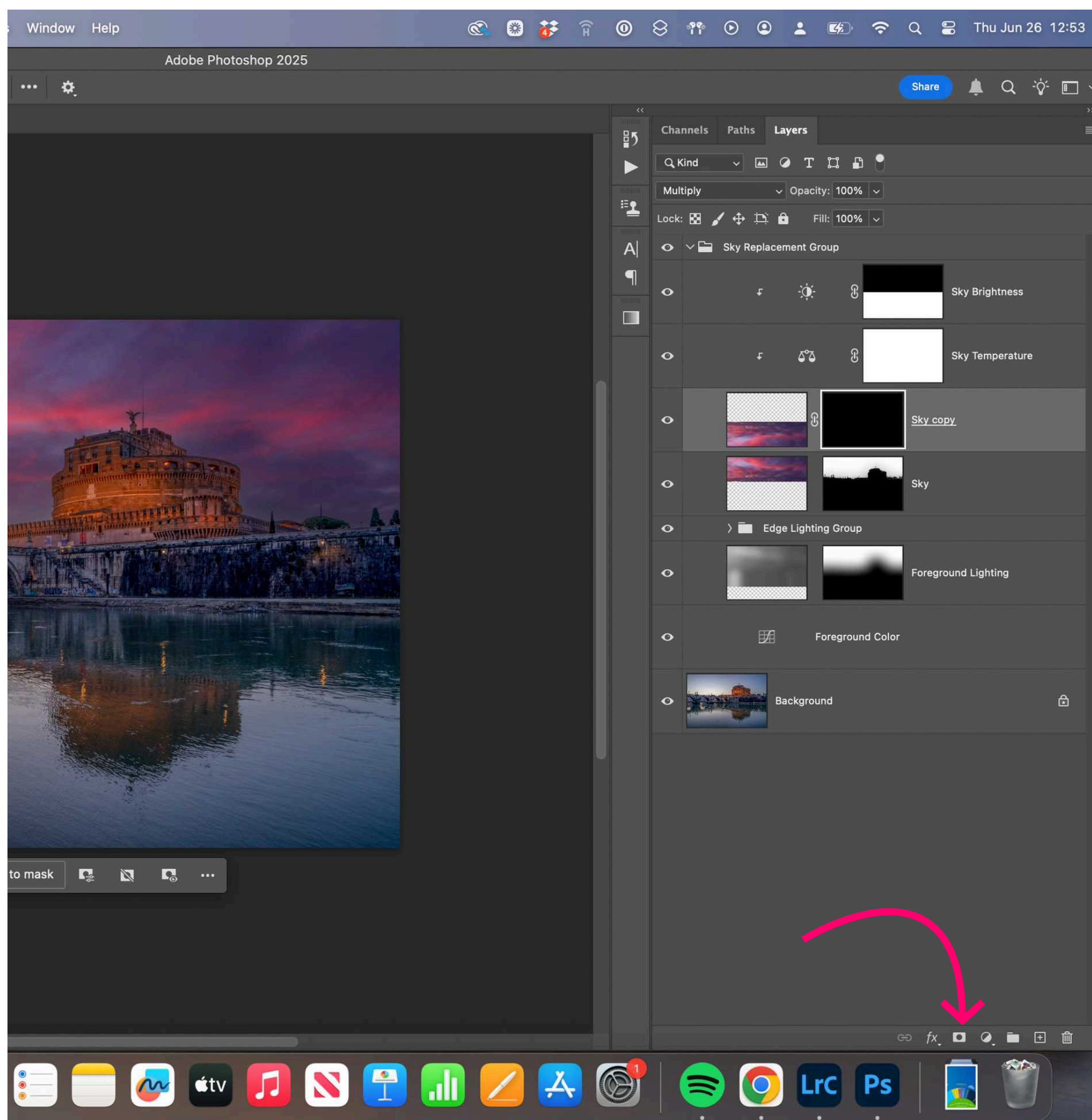
STEP 13

Above the layers put the bottom sky in multiply mode this will blend the color better



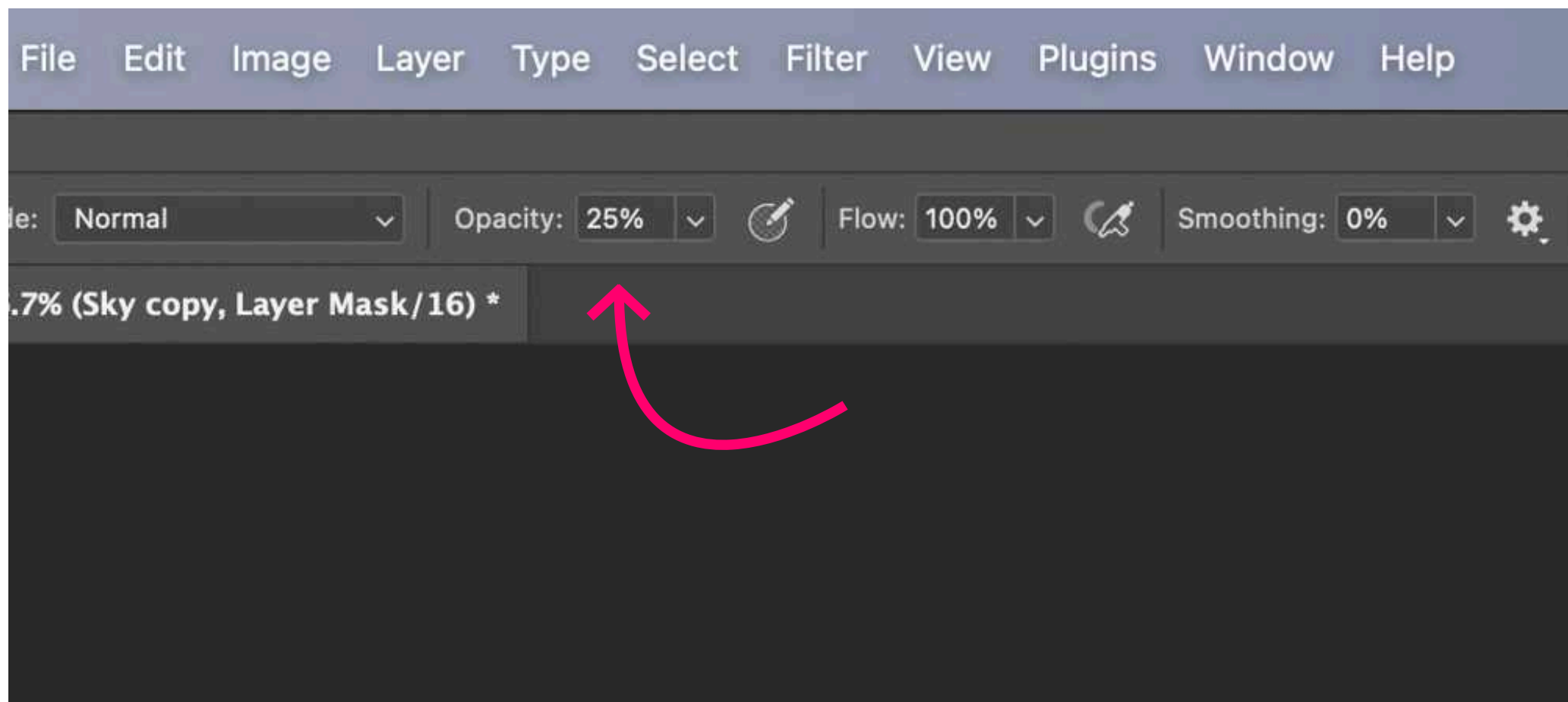
STEP 14

On a Mac, hold down the OPTION key, or on PC, press ALT, and then click the Create Mask button. This action will generate a black mask, effectively making the reflection vanish. Keep in mind that in Photoshop, black conceals while white reveals when using masks.

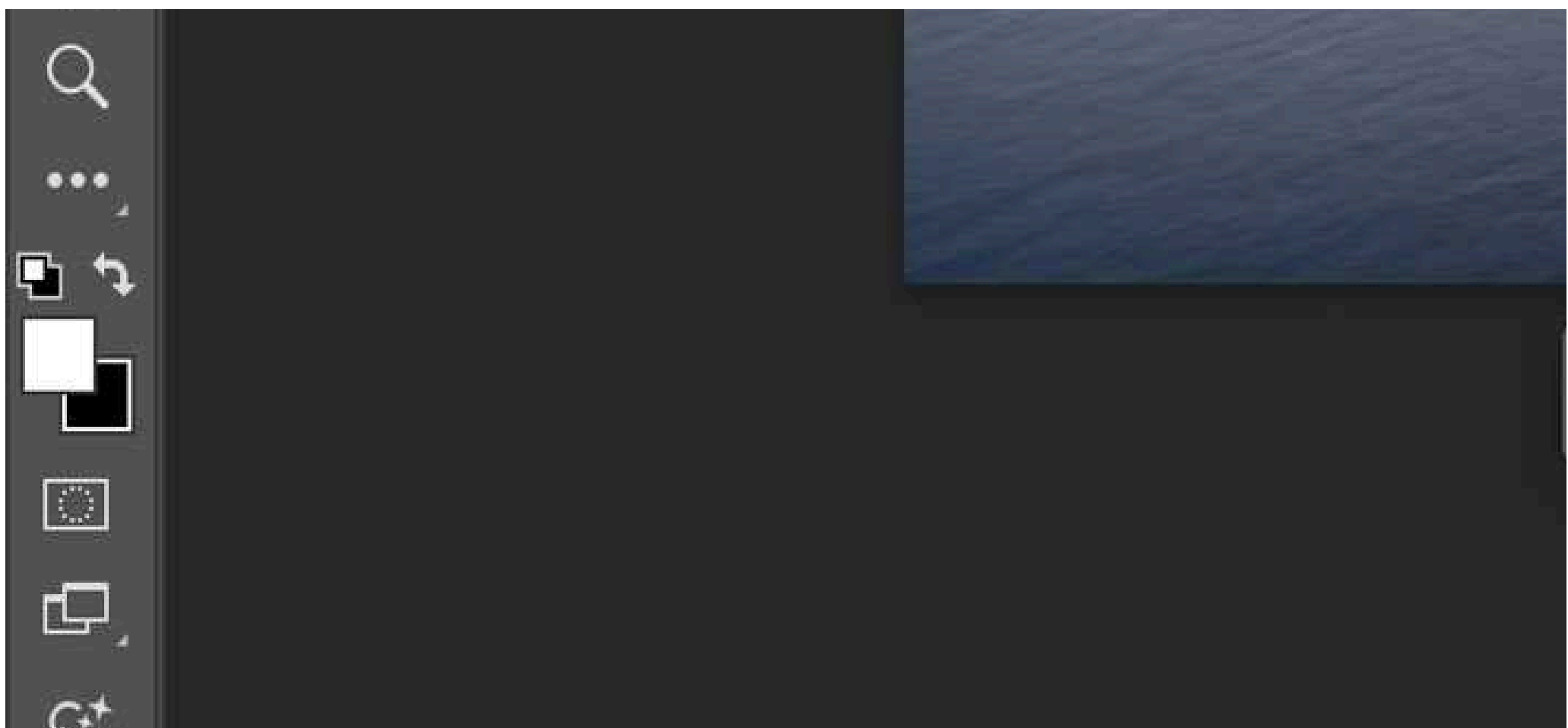


STEP 15

Press B for brush and then make sure the opacity is at around 25%.

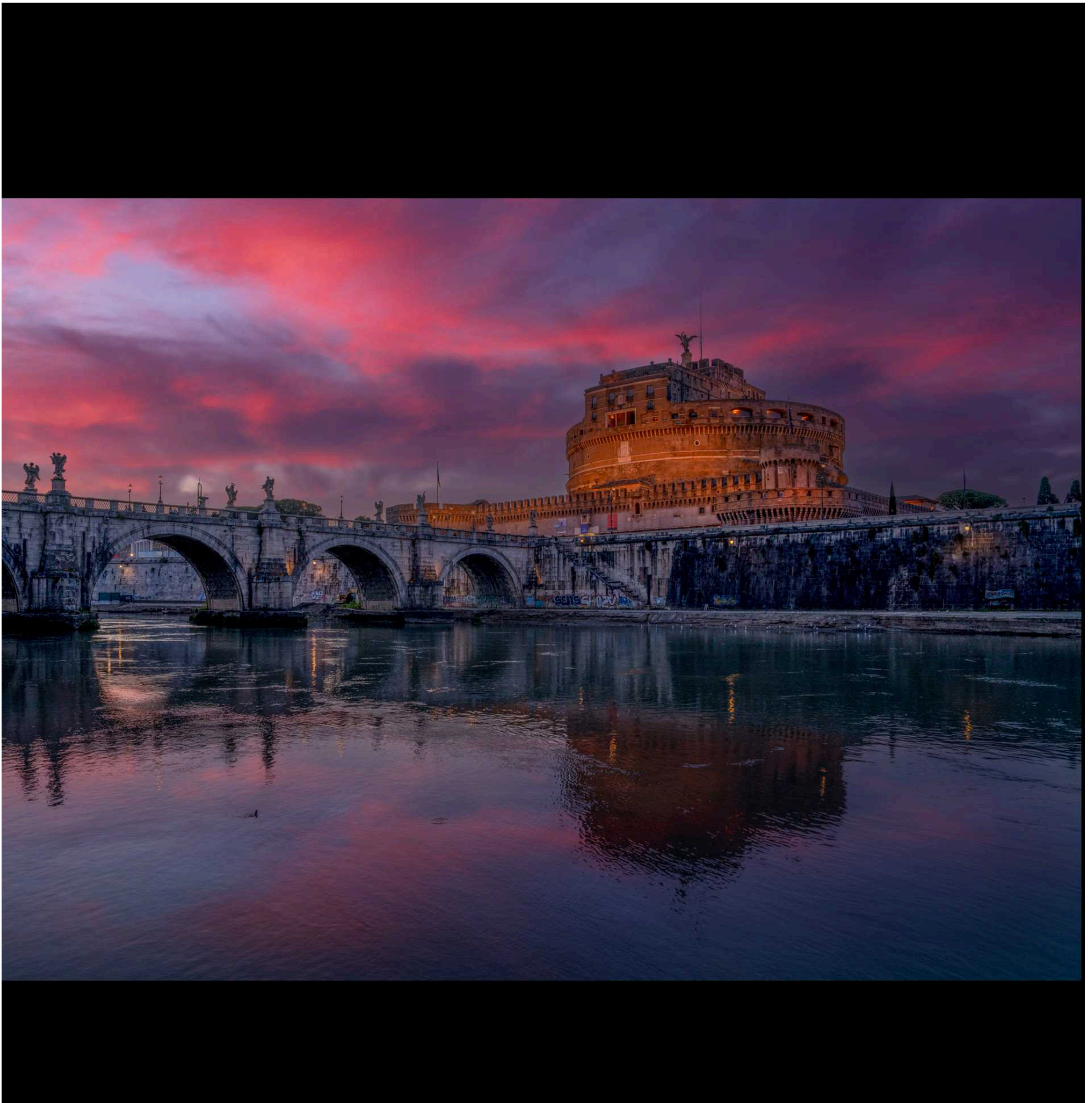


Press D to make sure that your foreground color is white



STEP 16

Brush the bottom of the photo until the reflection is there, and then save and close the photo. It will come back into Lightroom with the sky replaced by the reflection. Well done!



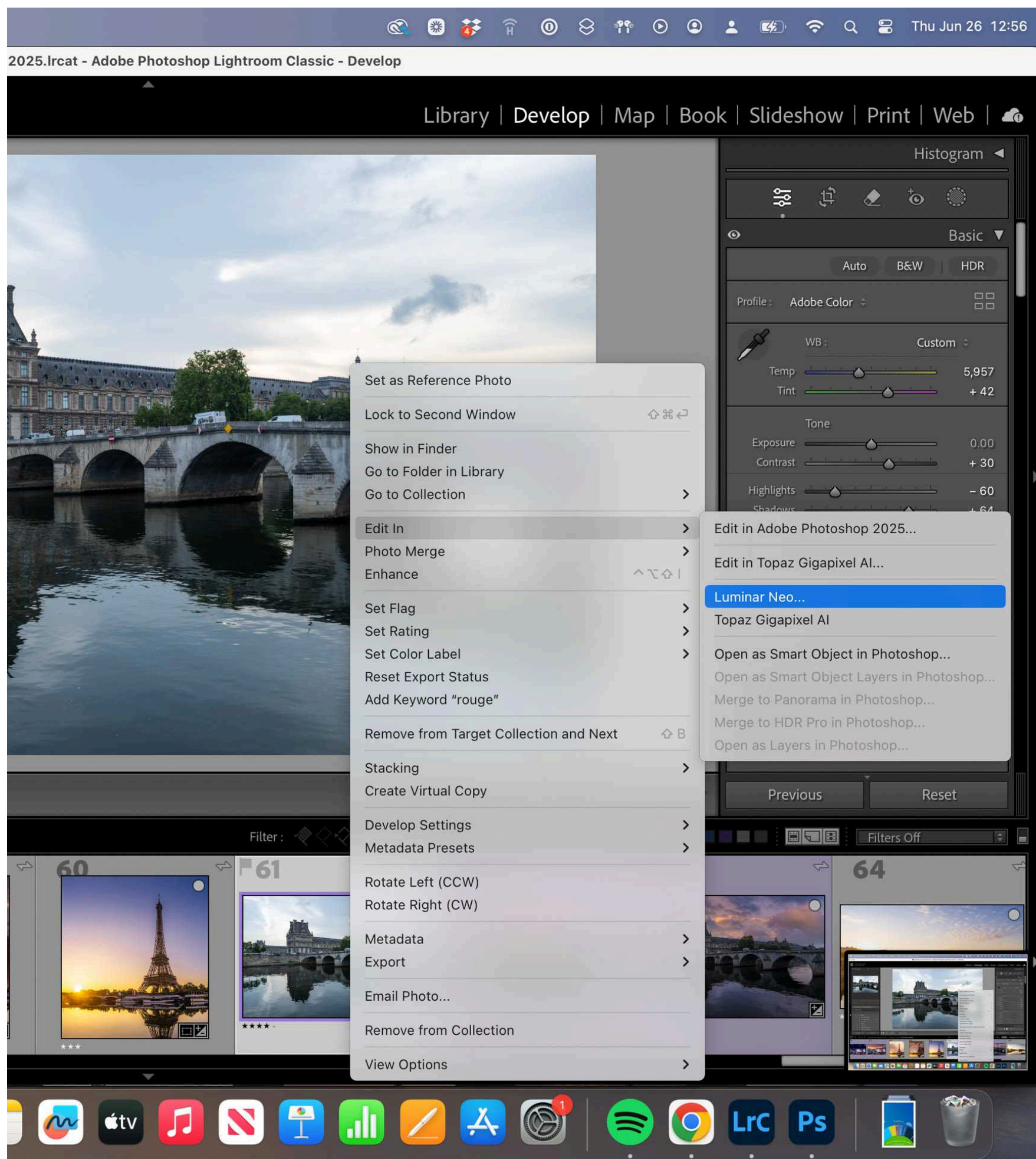
Before

After

IN LUMINAR NEO MUCH FASTER *AND* EASIER REFLECTIONS

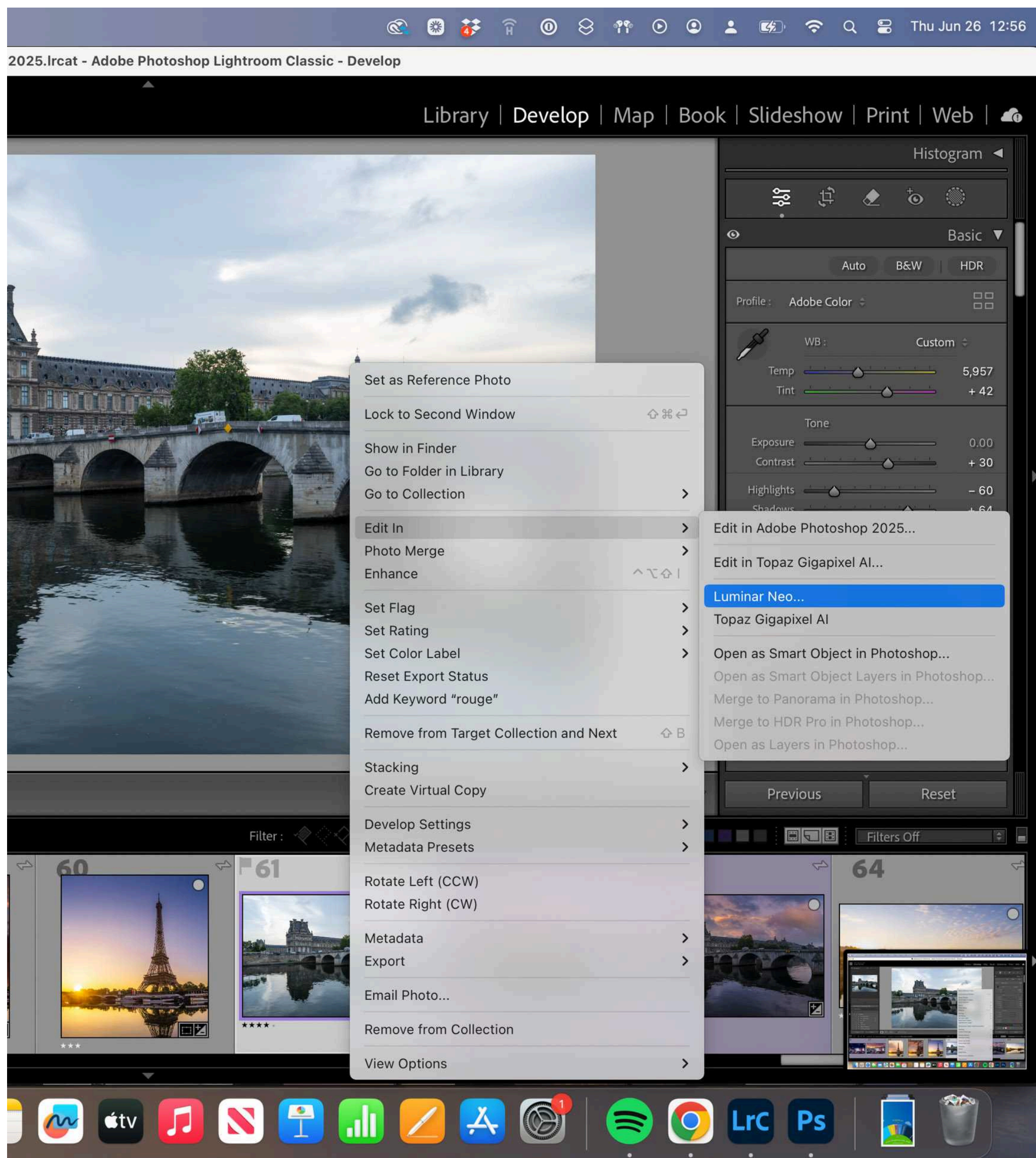
STEP 1

Select the photo and if you are in Lightroom Classic right click and click edit in Luminar Neo



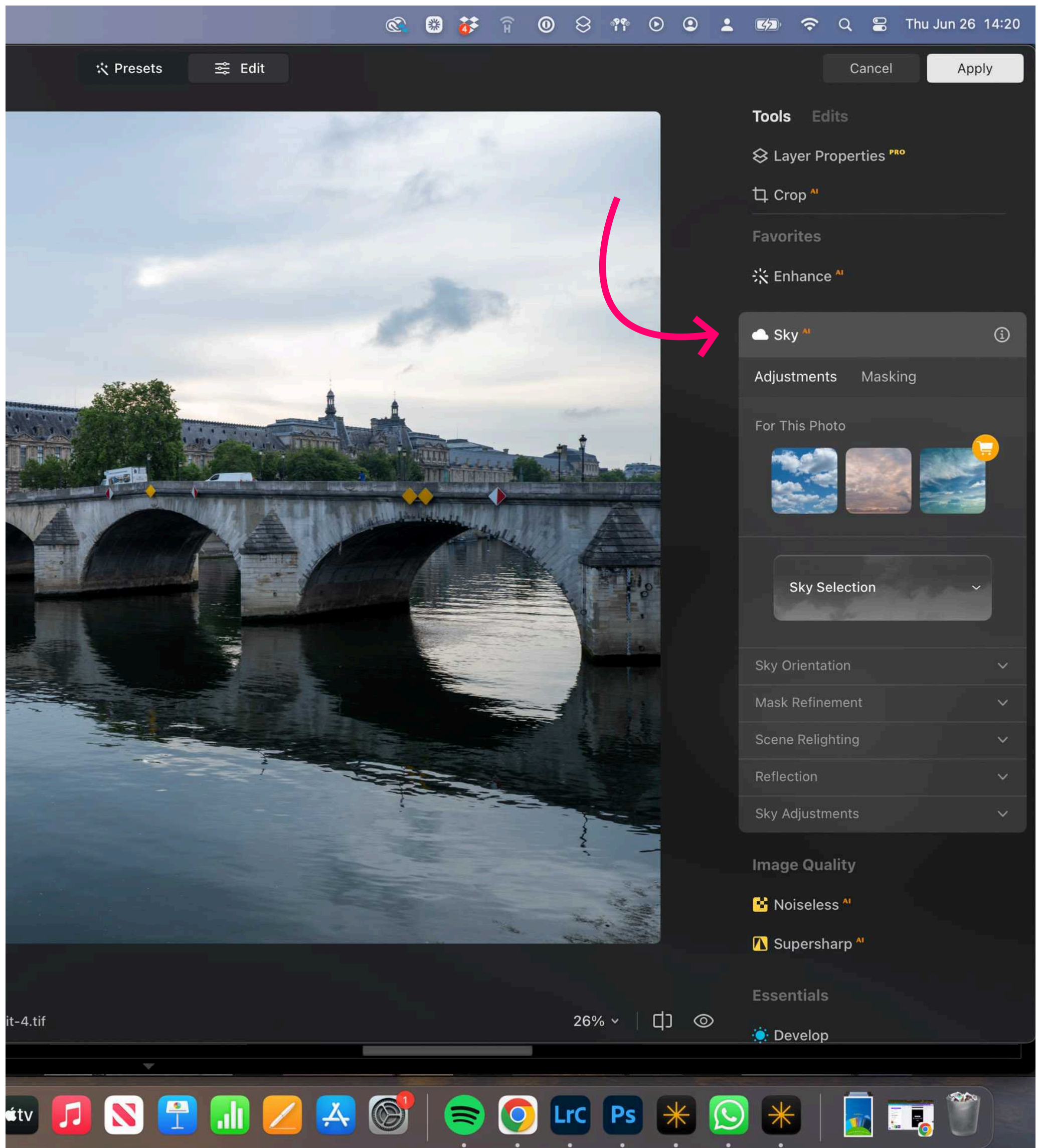
STEP 1

Select the photo and if you are in Lightroom Classic right click and click edit in Luminar Neo



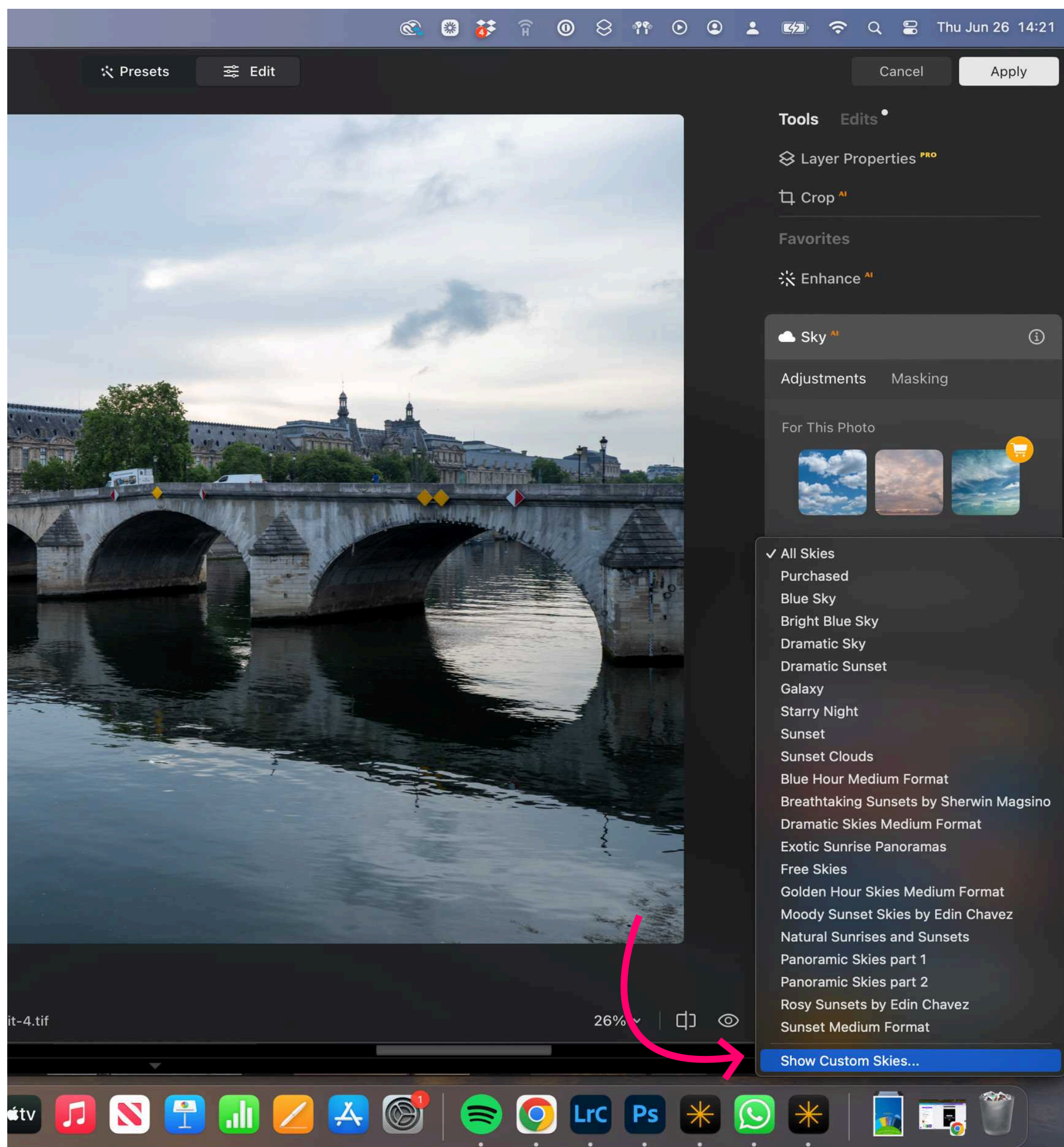
STEP 2

Click on edit at the top and then
on skies at the right side



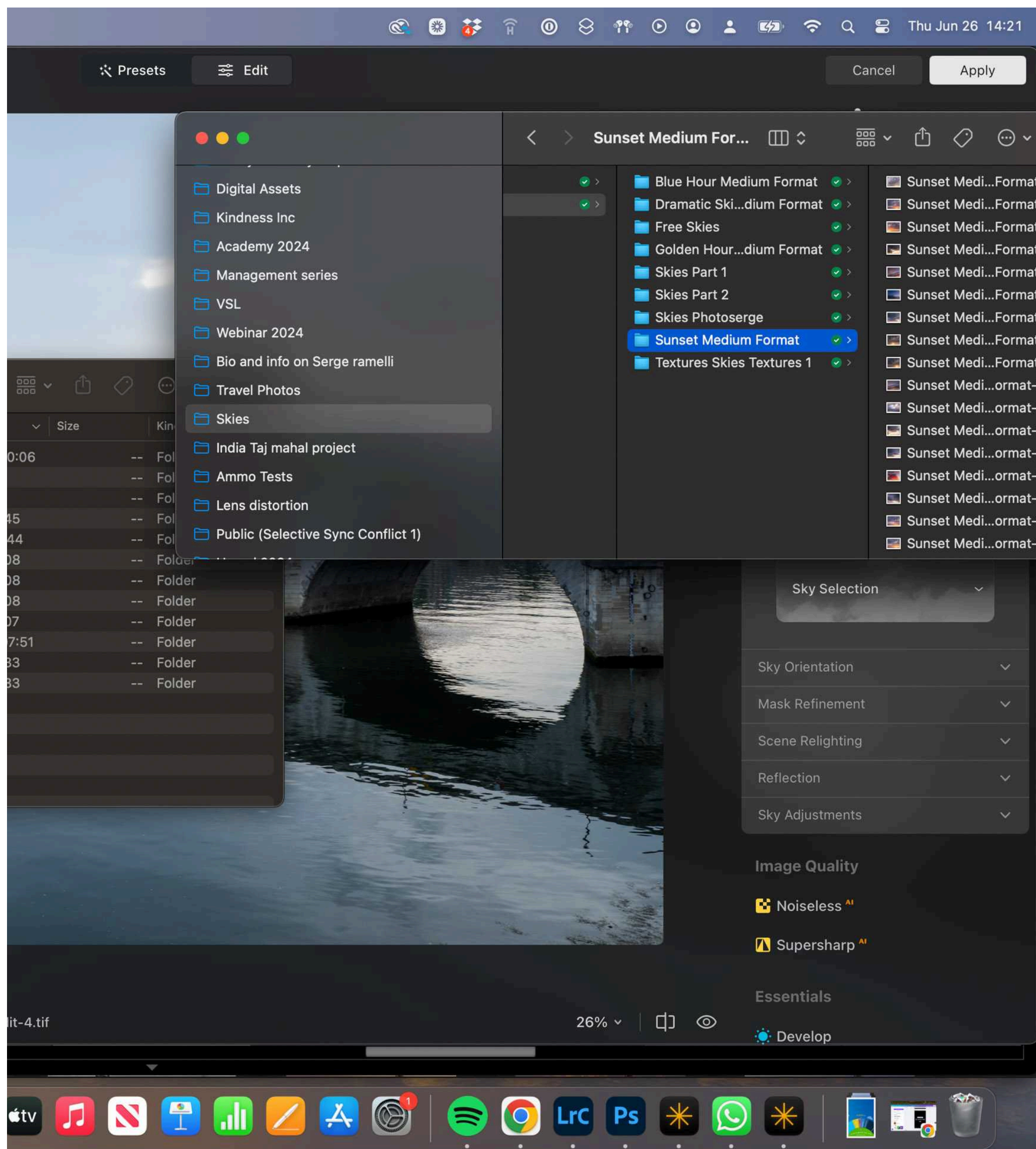
STEP 3

If you want to add skies like we did in Photoshop, click on the Sky selection button and choose the options Show custom skies



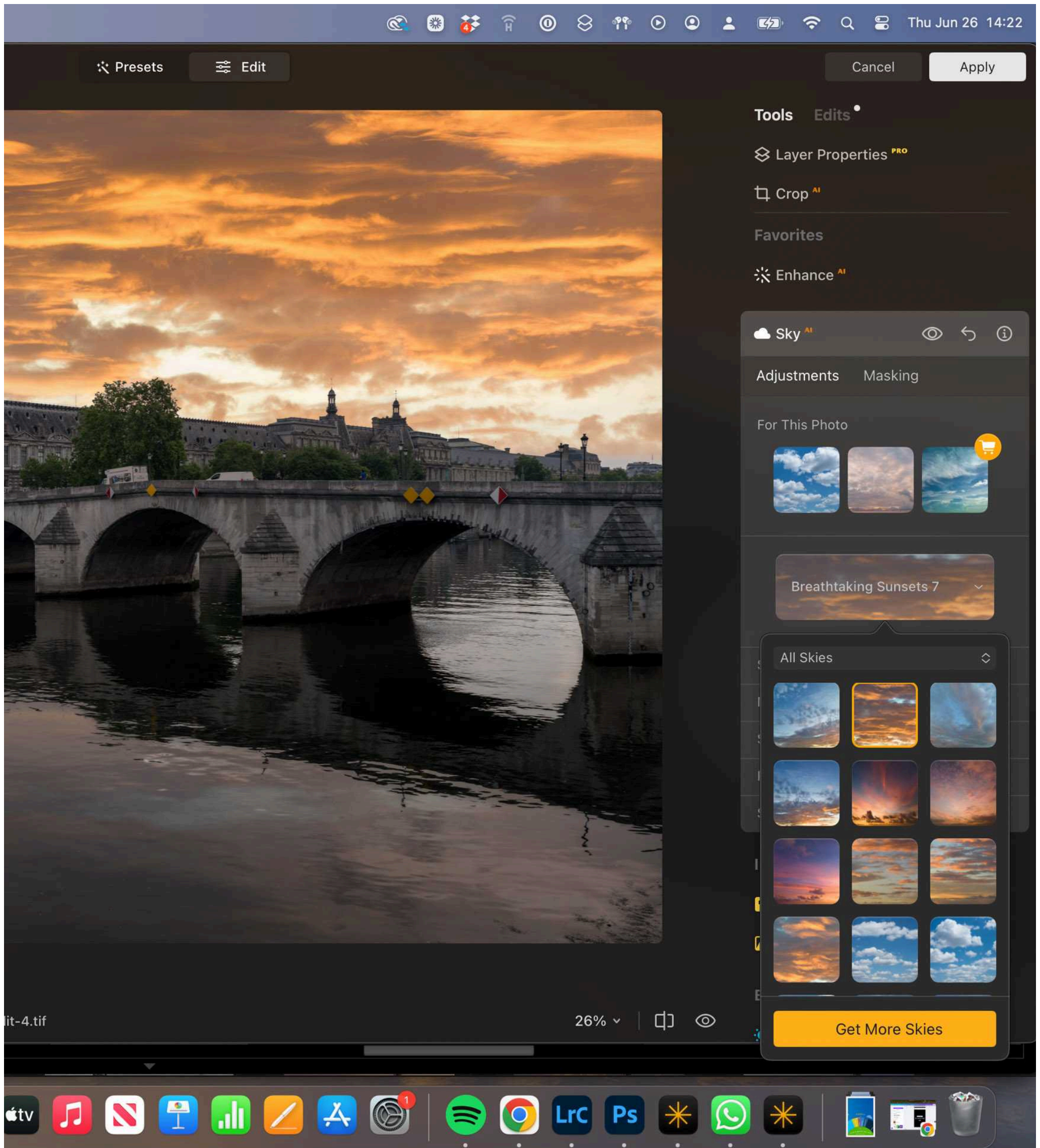
STEP 4

This will open a folder; simply drag and drop your files into that folder, and voilà—they will be stored there permanently!



STEP 5

Pick a sky that was **TAKEN** at
the same time but **BETTER**



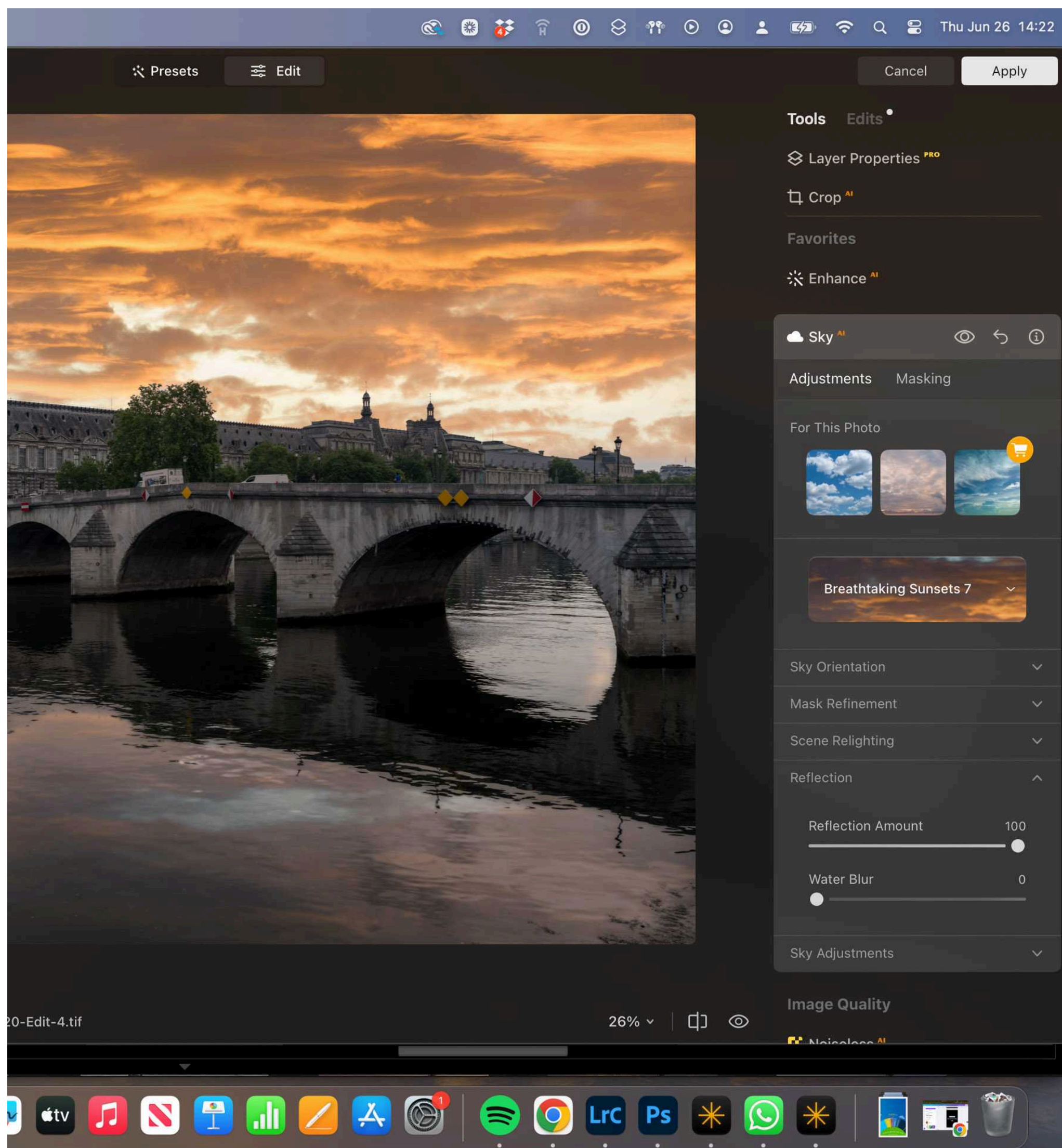
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SKIES HERE *BY* VISITING:

PHOTOSERGE.ME/*SKIES*

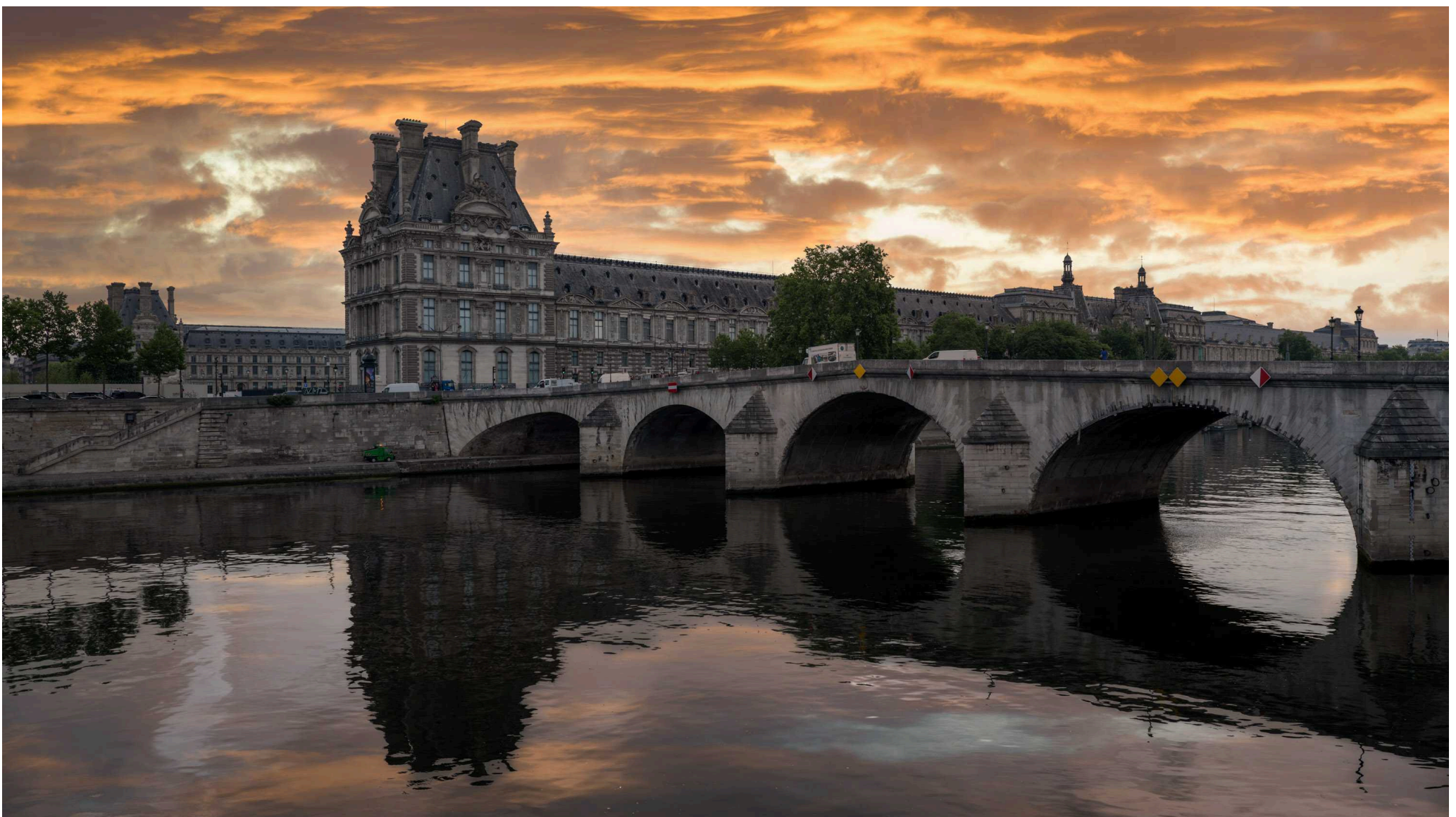
Don't forget to use
the coupon code: **WELCOME**
at checkout to receive a 50% discount
on the release price. It may or may
not work, but if it does, be sure
to take advantage of it!

STEP 6

Go to the sliders on that window and find the reflection and adjust it to your liking. I usually put it all the way if the water is very still, and less if there are a bit of waves.



And voila!



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AND THAT IT INSPIRES YOU TO
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50% discount on the release price. It
might work, so if it does, be sure to
grab it while you can

Thank you very much!
Wishing you happy sky replacements!

