Take Advantage of VisualTour's Panoramic Features on Macs
A Basic Look at Calico Panorama Software

People running Windows have access to the VisualTour Studio software, which includes a stitching component for converting individual images into scrolling panoramic images. Mac users who are not employing Windows might find a similar feature in their cameras or iPhone or might already have experience stitching images with software like Photoshop. If not, we have found a shareware program (shareware means you can try it free and make sure you like it before buying) that seems to do well with stitching. It is called Calico Panorama.

VisualTour has no affiliation with Kekus Digital LLC, the makers of Calico Panorama software. We are just trying to be helpful and pass along a discovery we made that might help you. Feel free to use any software you want for stitching, or stick to photos straight out of your camera, which can still be animated on the screen with no stitching needed.

These instructions were created using version 1.8, which is their easier version. They do also have a version 2 (no price difference, currently $39 for either one), which allows you a lot more manual control over alignment, but if you take your photos properly, you will find that you will not need that control (or fuss).

Taking photos properly means:
Stand in one place and take photos left to right by <u>pivoting</u> your body, not moving around the room. You probably do not need a tripod, but try to stay relatively level as you pivot.

Include 10%-20% overlap between your photos. In other words, make sure each photo has some common element with the previous one, so the stitching can determine where the photos should line up. That light switch, lamp, or sofa cushion makes all the difference. See the photos at the top of this page for an example of common elements from one photo to the next (the wall hanging in photos 1 and 2, the window and front door in photos 2 and 3).

Need to fit more in each photo? Some people also like to turn their camera on its side to include more vertical area in each piece. That is fine, perhaps even recommended. Just do NOT zoom in and out.

Version 1 is easier to use and far more automated, so it is our recommendation. If you are curious, we have some information about version 2 at the end of these instructions.

To Install:
Download from http://www.kekus.com/calico_panorama.html
or
http://www.tucows.com/preview/832294/Calico-Panorama

Drag and drop it into the Applications folder when prompted.
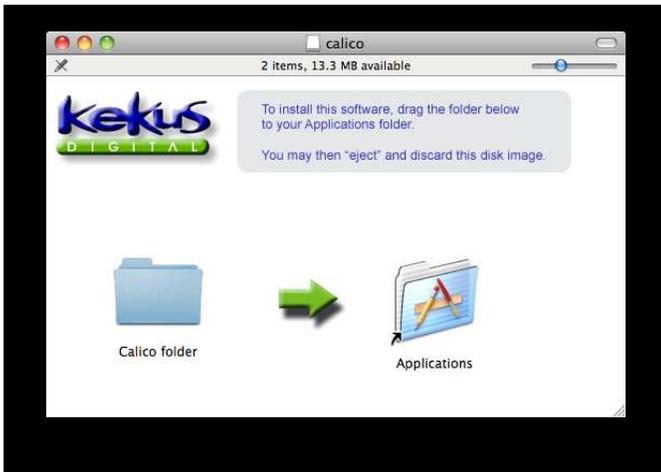
To Start it, open the Applications folder and double click the Calico Folder…
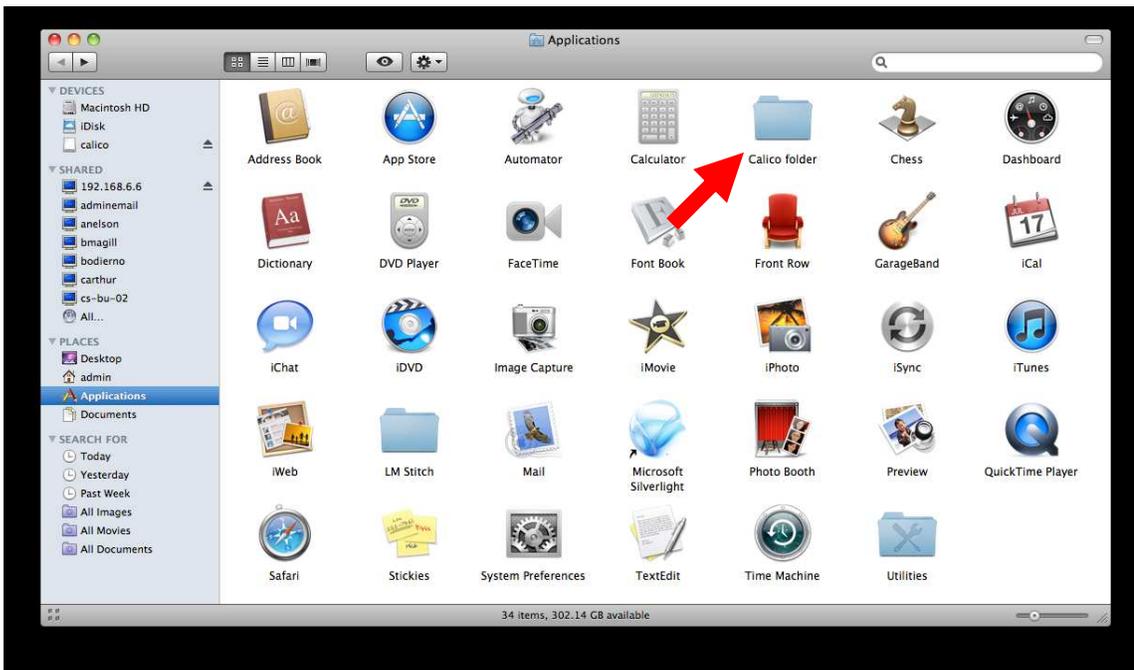
then the Calico icon
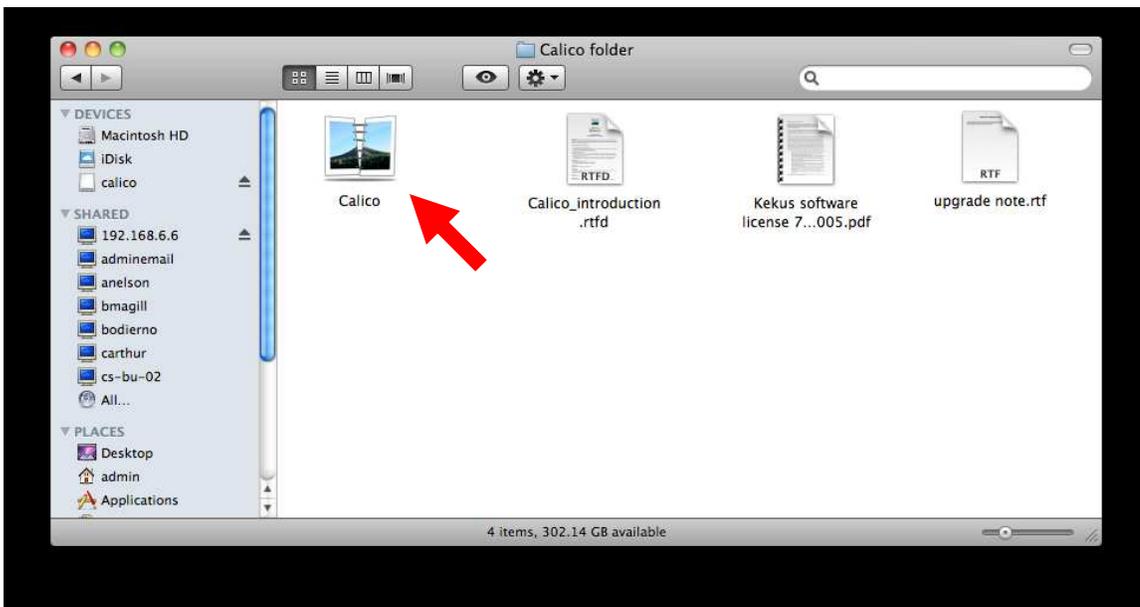
Stitching:

Here are the basic steps. Feel free to visit the manufacturer's site for all the details and options. They even have some videos.

Drag images into the lower gray box OR click the Load option at the bottom of the screen then choose From Disk or From iPhoto.
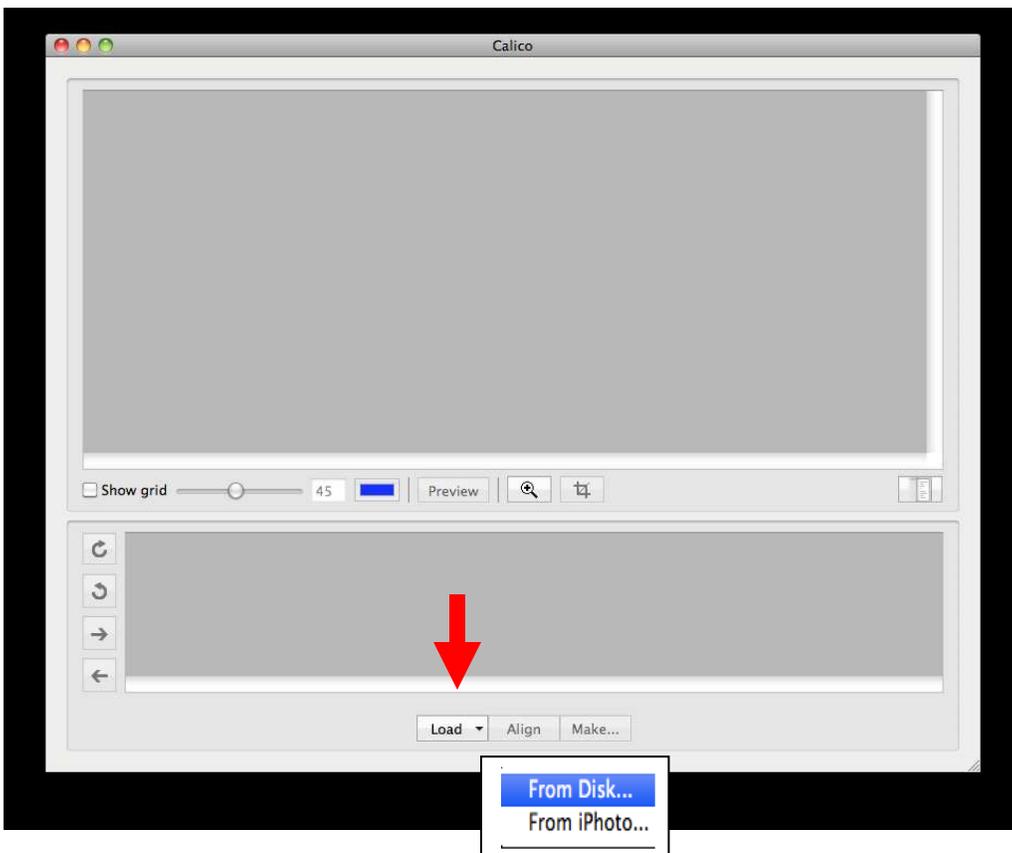
From Disk:
Locate the images on your computer. Clicking the photo names will allow you to preview the images so you can be sure of which ones you want to import.
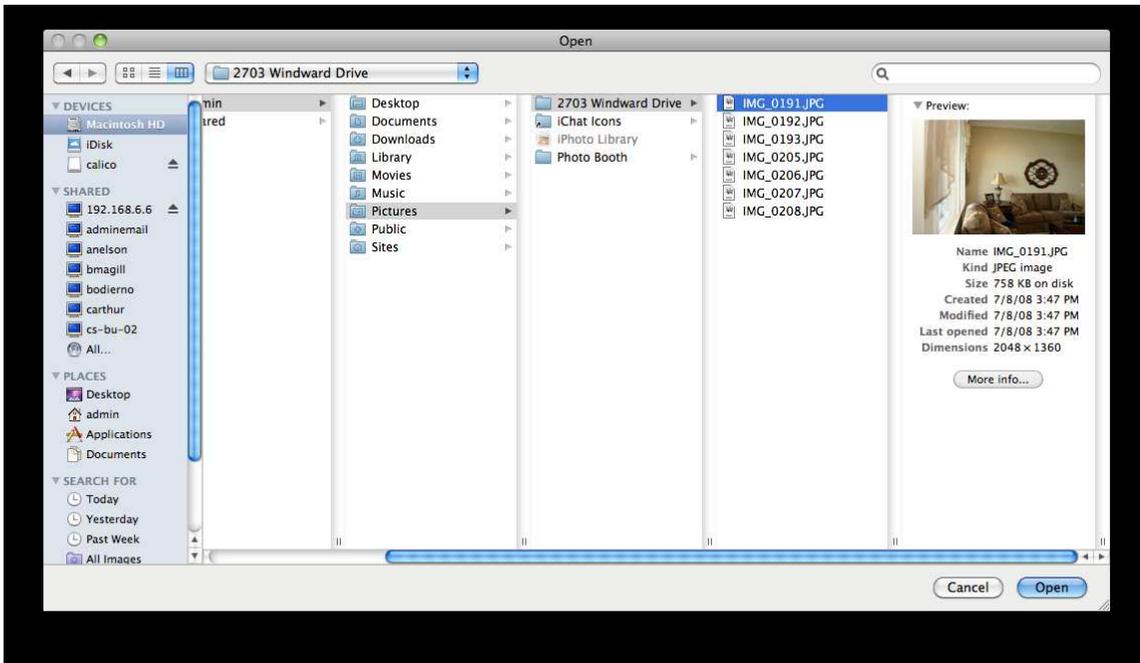
Click the first of the images you wish to import for the first scene to be stitched. Press the Command key and select the other images (or if you are selecting multiple consecutive images, select the first, then press shift and click the last so they are all selected). Click Open.
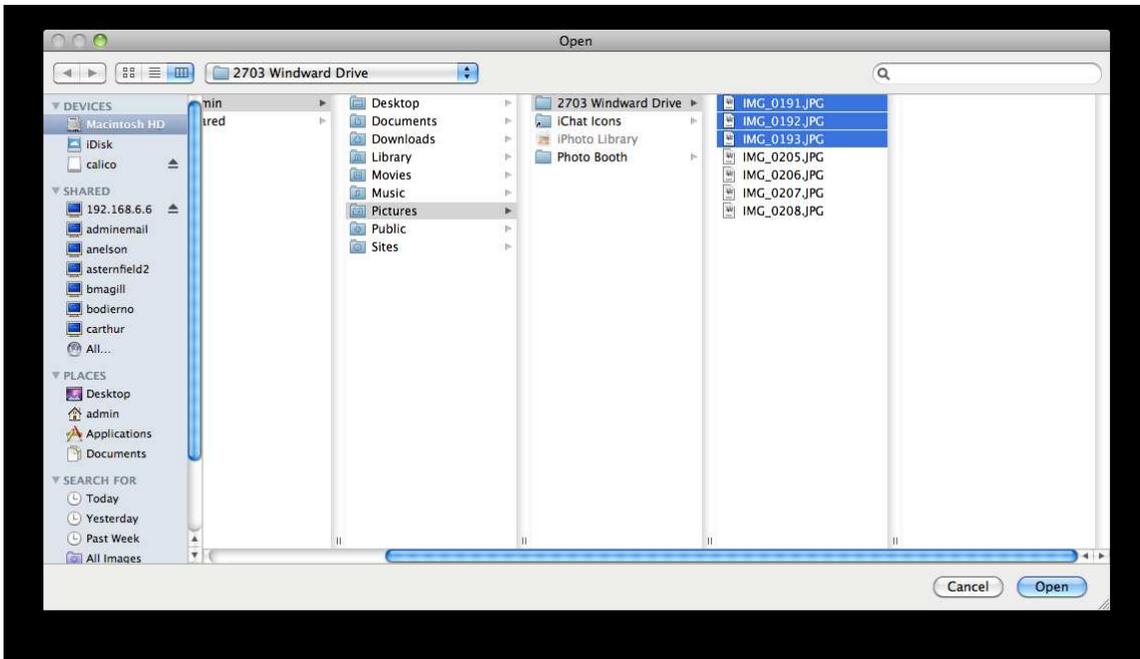
The software does have the ability to bring in photos for several scenes at one time and sort them into groups, but in the interest of keeping things simple, we are suggesting you import the photos for one scene at a time. Feel free to explore the more advanced options on your own.

The "From iPhoto" method works almost the same way. The screen looks slightly different and has no Open button, so you just drag the photos into the software from the "From iPhoto" screen.
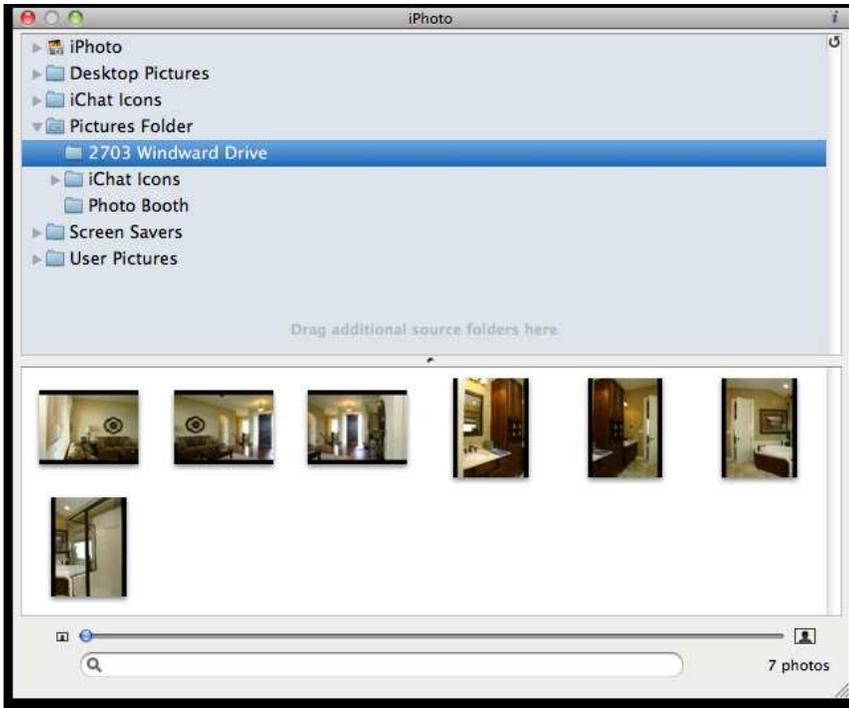
If the images are not in the proper sequence, you can drag and drop them in the lower portion. You will also see rotate buttons and arrow buttons that reverse the sequence of the photos in case they were originally taken right to left instead of left to right (like VisualTour's 123-321 option).
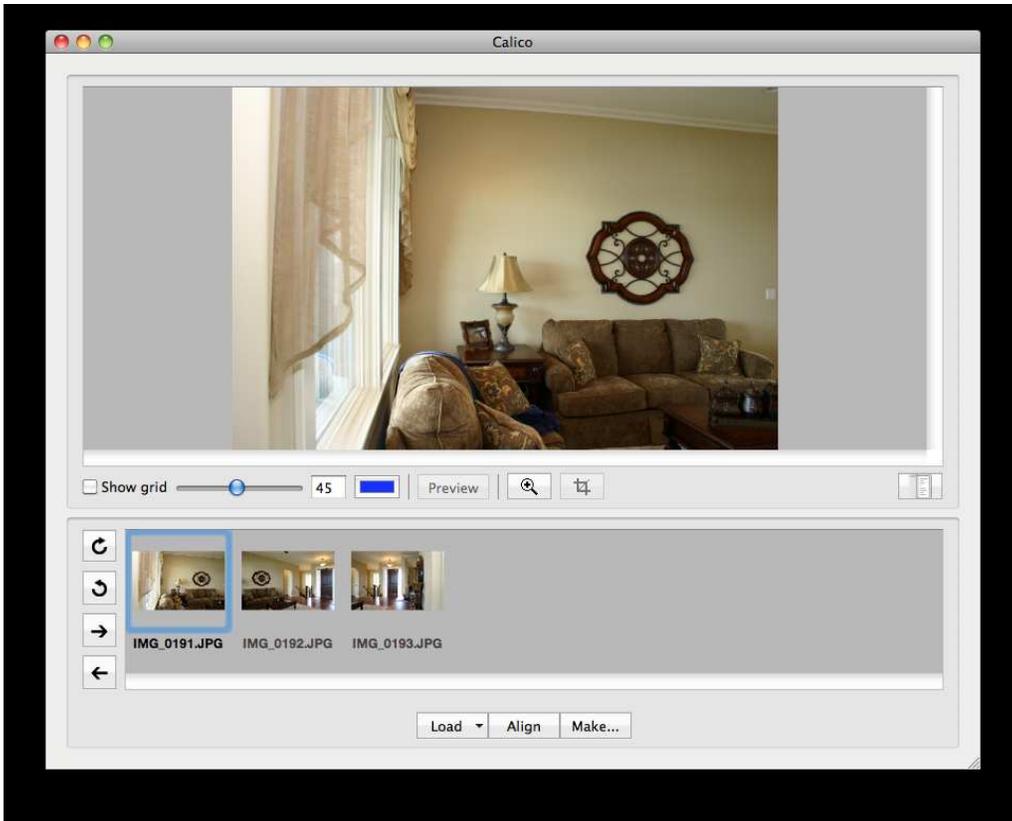
Click Align. The panoramic is made.
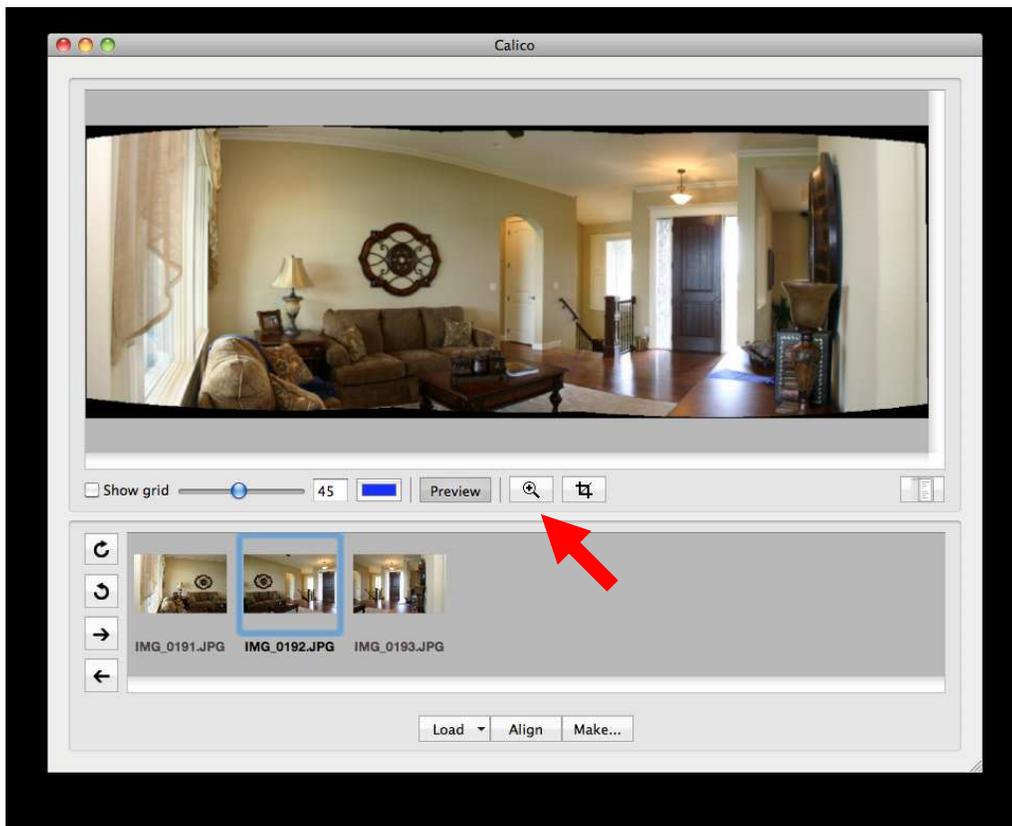
Under the stitched image are some buttons.

The Preview button allows you to go back to the view of the individual images.

The magnifier with a plus sign adds a magnifying lens to the screen. You can drag it around to check for imperfections in the stitching, although version 1.8 does not seem to have much you can do to fix the images. Click the magnifier button again to remove the lens.

The button next to the magnifier is a cropping tool. It is handy for removing the curved or ragged edges that appear once the photos are aligned. Click it once to make square "handles" appear around the image.
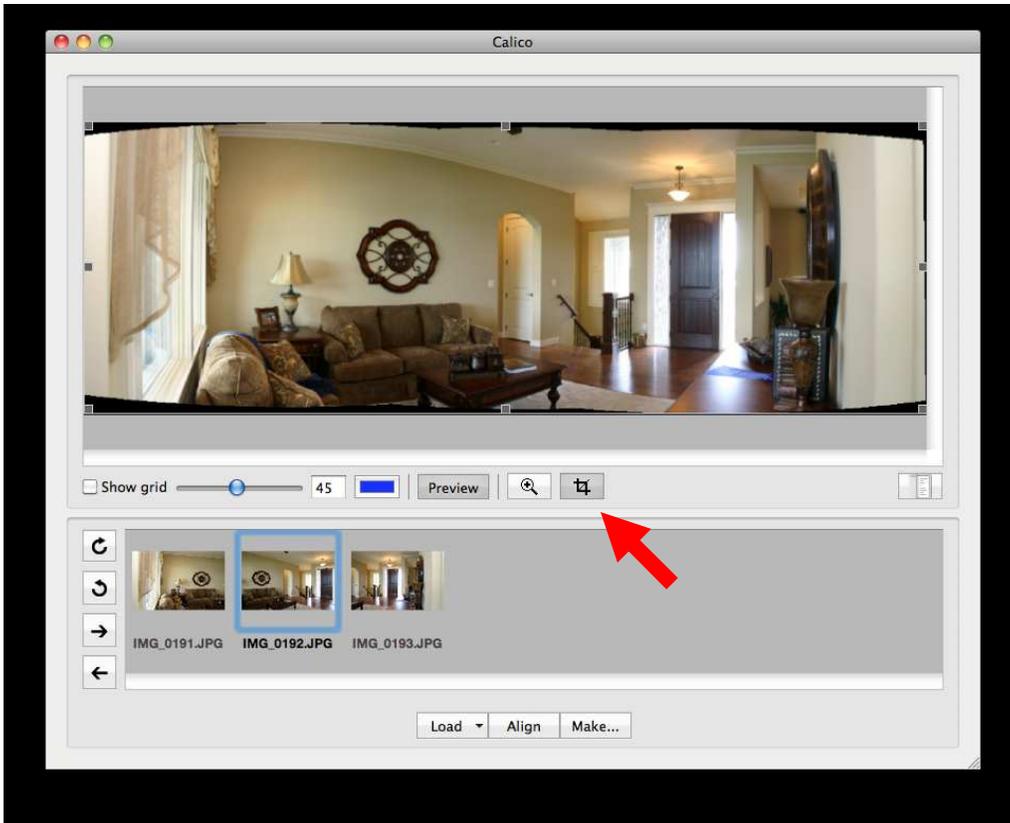
Drag those in or out to define the box that indicates where the cutoff point should be for the image's edges. When your mouse pointer is a hand, it allows you to move the box. When it is a double sided arrow with a line, it is allowing you to resize the box.
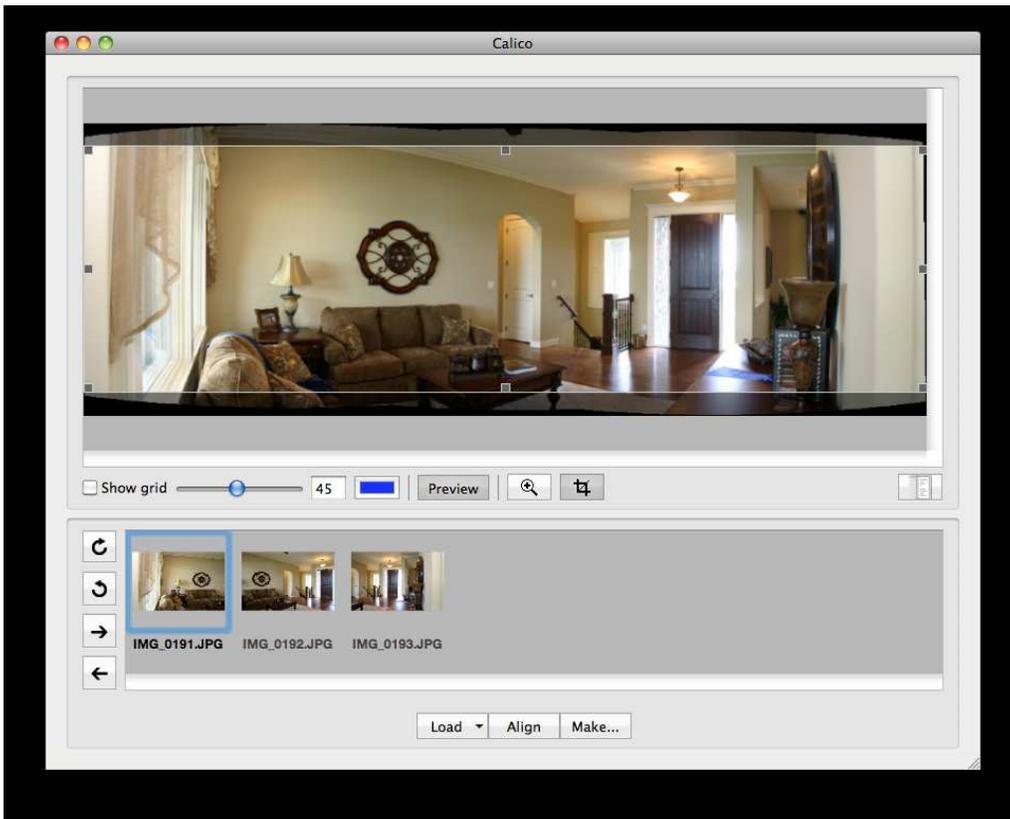
Click Make. A screen appears with options for the saved image.

Make Panorama

Size

- ⊙ Scale: [slider] 100%
- ○ Width: 4405 px
- ○ Height: 1526 px

Render Options

Interpolator: Cubic (Default)
Blending: Multiband (Def...)
☐ Exposure Equalization

Cropping Options

☑ Apply Preview Crop

Manual Crop Parameters

Top: 13.81   Left: 75.62
Bottom: -15.33   Right: -24.65

Format

JPEG

JPEG Quality: [slider]

File name and location

/Users/admin/Pictures/2703 Windward □   Browse...

☐ Sleep when done   Close   Make

Scale
Choose by percentage or exact width and height. Leave it at 100% unless you feel like the image is too large and you want to reduce the size when saving it. The VisualTour.com website will do that automatically when you upload super sized images, so there is no need to scale them down at this point.

Render Options
The defaults are fine.

Cropping Options
Check the box to Apply Preview Crop if you made adjustments

Format
Choose JPEG. A slider will appear to allow you to adjust the quality. Moving it toward the right will create a better quality image but will take more space on your computer. Moving it to the left saves disk space but can sacrifice quality.

File name and location
Use the Browse button to select a place to save your final image.

Click the Make button. The software will render and save the image, and you are returned to the main screen.

You can now upload that panoramic image into your tour online using the Tour Builder tool (Create Tour on the My Account screen of you VisualTour.com account) or if your tour is already online, click My Tours, then the PHOTOS button next to the tour, then Add Photo(s) in the upper right to upload the new panorama as an individual image.

Need More Control? Try Version 2

The newer version works pretty much the same way. Here are the differences we saw.

1) Even in trial mode, it adds a watermark (superimposed translucent text) to your images.

2) After the images are imported but before they are aligned, the first two images in the group are shown side by side with small numbered dots of color superimposed on them. Each number appears on both the left and right sides of the screen to represent where the software thinks the images match. You can move those points to match better if they do not appear to be correct (try hitting the regular align button first since you probably do not need to manually align the dots). If you do need to manually align these control points, use the Zoom magnifier at the top to help you see more clearly. After aligning the first two images, use the arrows between them to move on to the next set.
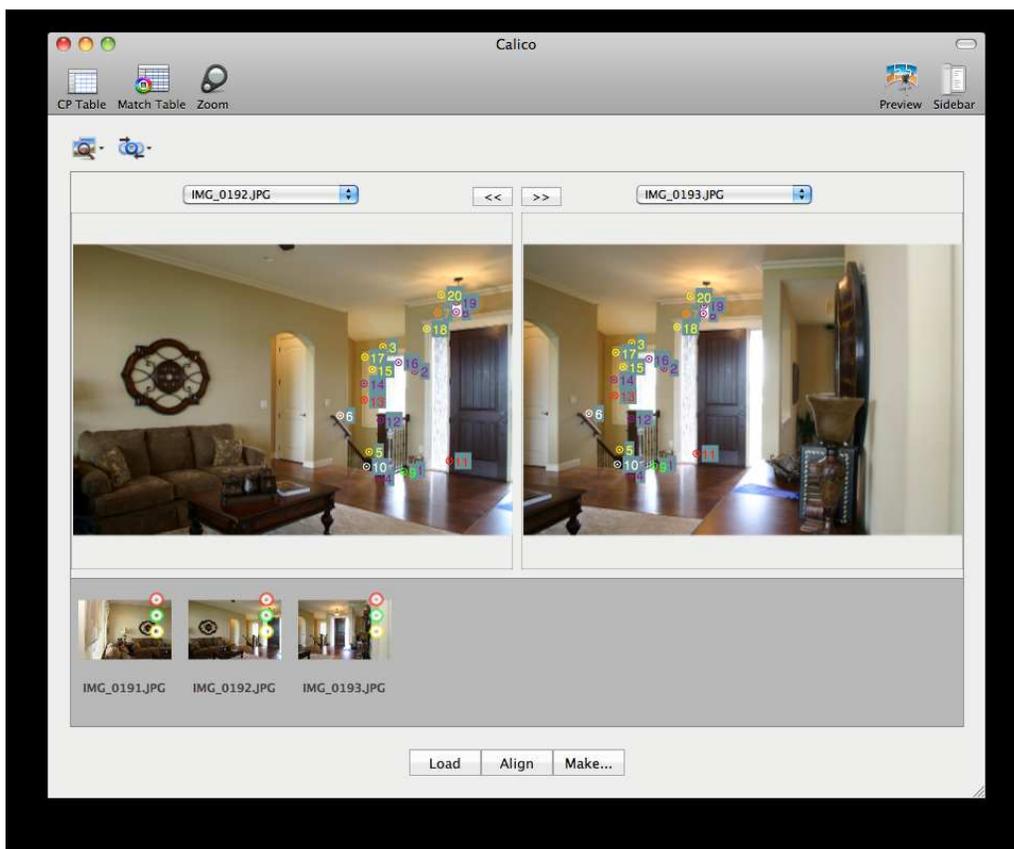
3) After clicking align, some settings are displayed before the actual alignment takes place. The default settings seem fine, but if the photos being used were not taken under ideal circumstances, they are sure to be of some use.
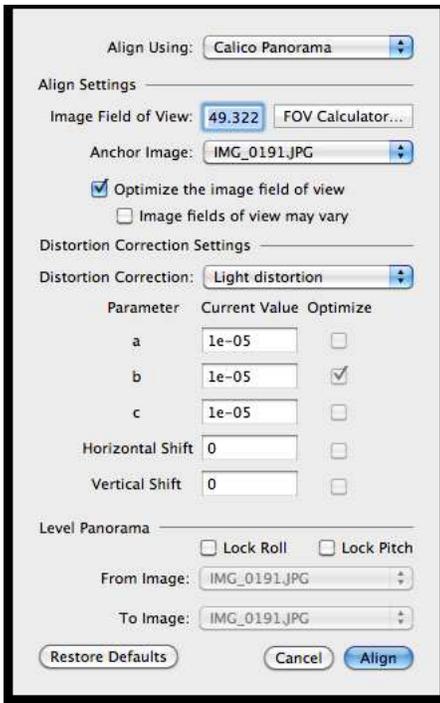
4) After aligning the images, version 2 places the adjustment buttons above instead of below the image.
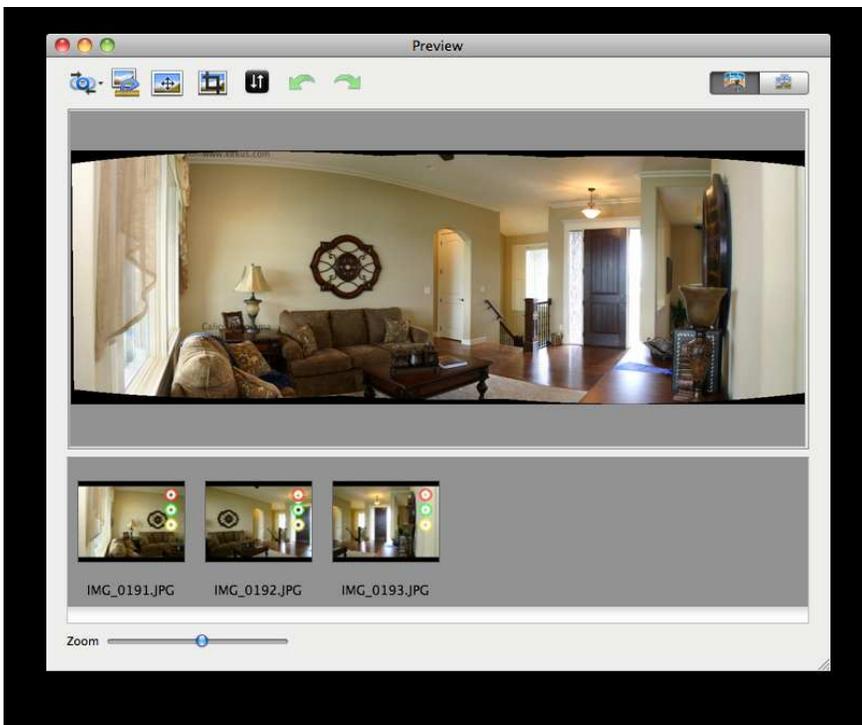
The first three buttons (Align Settings, Image Parameters, and Shift) are new and bring up some advanced options. If your camera was sitting crooked on a tripod, you might find the Shift option easy enough to understand for some quick rotation to fix the images (although the fifth button is an easier option).

The fourth button is for cropping, but unlike version 1, which draws the box and then allows you to change the size, version 2 has you drag a box to start the process. Altering the cropping box is the same after that.
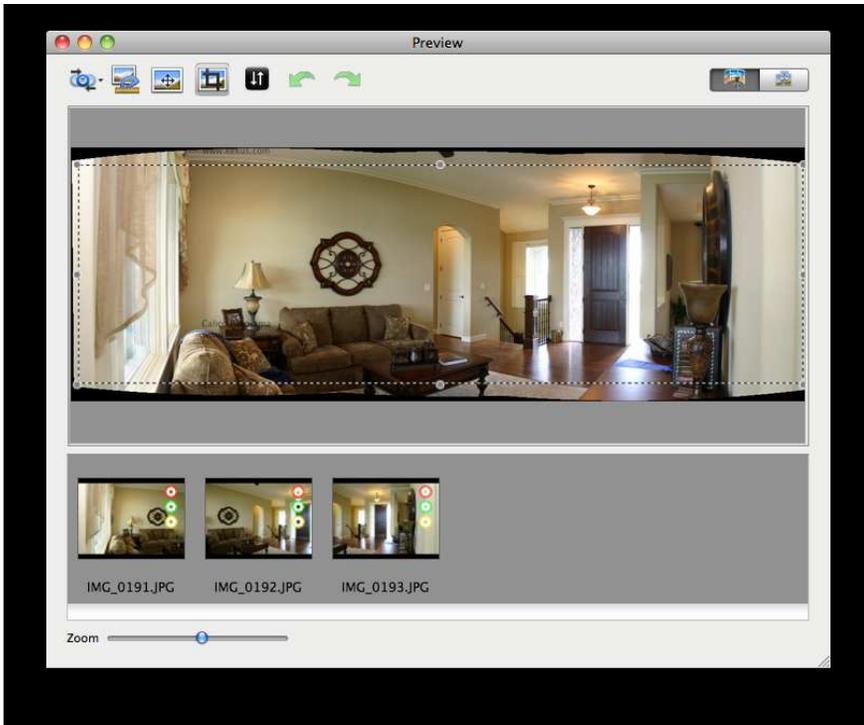
The fifth button for Auto Level will fix images that end up tilted. Try using this in place of the Shift adjustment from the third button.

5) The Make Panorama screen is laid out differently but serves the same purpose to save the results.
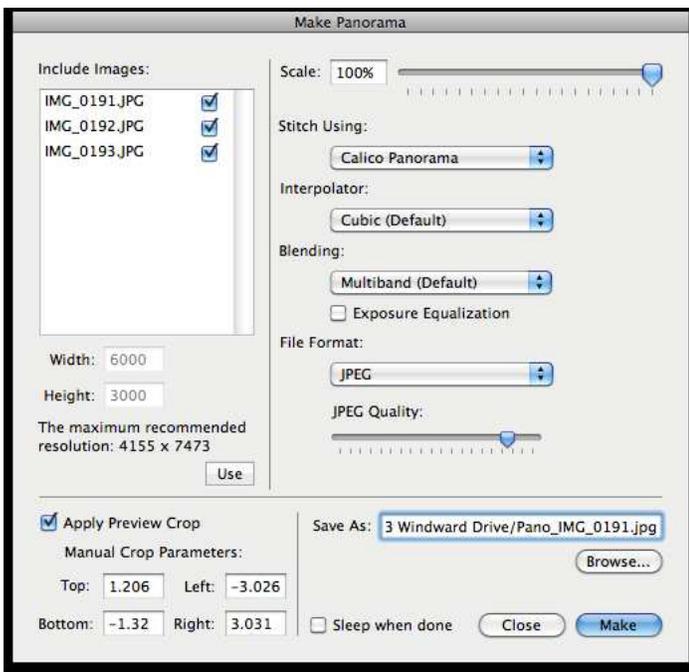
Our advice? Use version 1.8.