

Where did the Windows Vista wallpaper images come from?

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Windows Vista needed some new wallpapers. Where to get them? Historically, they were purchased from a professional service, which is expensive since Microsoft would need worldwide rights to reproduce (not just use) the image, and not just for a few months, but for decades. Besides, there are a lot of good amateur photographers at Microsoft who would be thrilled to have their work displayed on millions of computers all over the world. But why stop there? Creative Director [Jenny Lam](#) expanded the search to [Flickr](#) and contacted people who took really interesting pictures, asking them, “So, how would you like one of your photos included among the default wallpapers in Windows Vista?” The Flickr artists were excited to be a part of Windows Vista (one of them by an astonishing coincidence happened to be a beta tester), and after the lawyers had their say—because nothing is complete without lawyers getting involved—Microsoft sent the photographers on a commissioned photo shoot. Jenny tells me that these amateur photographers were great to work with. They don’t have the ego problems that some professional photographers can have. (Another thing that I learned from Jenny is that photos which look great on paper do not always translate well to the screen.) Ultimately, Jenny studied over 50 gigabytes of low-resolution images. (Off the top of her head, she estimates that she evaluated over 10,000 images, but the math suggests it was a lot more.) About two thirds of the final wallpapers are licensed from various image libraries, with the rest split among amateur photographers recruited from Flickr, Microsoft employees who enjoy photography, and a professional photographer specifically hired for this purpose. Jenny confides that the ones from Flickr are her favorites. If you were wondering where those gorgeous pictures came from, the answer is many of them came from amateur photographers, regular people like you and me. (But with better taste.)

[Update 9:15am: [Long Zheng](#) has a bit more [on those wallpapers.](#)]

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