11.7 MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM VALUES

EXAMPLE A Find and classify the critical points of the function

$$f(x, y) = 10x^2y - 5x^2 - 4y^2 - x^4 - 2y^4$$

Also find the highest point on the graph of f.

SOLUTION The first-order partial derivatives are

$$f_x = 20xy - 10x - 4x^3 \qquad f_y = 10x^2 - 8y - 8y^3$$

So to find the critical points we need to solve the equations

$$\boxed{1} \qquad 2x(10y - 5 - 2x^2) = 0$$

$$\boxed{2} \qquad 5x^2 - 4y - 4y^3 = 0$$

From Equation 1 we see that either

$$x = 0 \qquad \text{or} \qquad 10y - 5 - 2x^2 = 0$$

In the first case ($x = 0$), Equation 2 becomes $-4y(1 + y^2) = 0$, so $y = 0$ and we have the critical point $(0, 0)$.

In the second case ($10y - 5 - 2x^2 = 0$), we get

$$\boxed{3} \qquad x^2 = 5y - 2.5$$

and, putting this in Equation 2, we have $25y - 12.5 - 4y - 4y^3 = 0$. So we have to solve the cubic equation

$$\boxed{4} \qquad 4y^3 - 21y + 12.5 = 0$$

Using a graphing calculator or computer to graph the function

$$g(y) = 4y^3 - 21y + 12.5$$

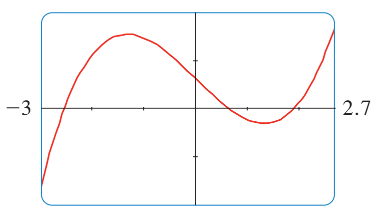

FIGURE 1

as in Figure 1, we see that Equation 4 has three real roots. By zooming in, we can find the roots to four decimal places:

$$y \approx -2.5452 \qquad y \approx 0.6468 \qquad y \approx 1.8984$$

(Alternatively, we could have used Newton's method or a rootfinder to locate these roots.) From Equation 3, the corresponding x-values are given by

$$x = \pm\sqrt{5y - 2.5}$$

If $y \approx -2.5452$, then x has no corresponding real values. If $y \approx 0.6468$, then $x \approx \pm 0.8567$. If $y \approx 1.8984$, then $x \approx \pm 2.6442$. So we have a total of five critical points, which are analyzed in the following chart. All quantities are rounded to two decimal places.

Critical point	Value of f	f_{xx}	D	Conclusion
$(0, 0)$	0.00	−10.00	80.00	local maximum
$(\pm 2.64, 1.90)$	8.50	−55.93	2488.72	local maximum
$(\pm 0.86, 0.65)$	−1.48	−5.87	−187.64	saddle point

Figures 2 and 3 give two views of the graph of f and we see that the surface opens downward. [This can also be seen from the expression for $f(x, y)$: The dominant terms are $-x^4 - 2y^4$ when $|x|$ and $|y|$ are large.] Comparing the values of f at its local maximum points, we see that the absolute maximum value of f is $f(\pm 2.64, 1.90) \approx 8.50$. In other words, the highest points on the graph of f are $(\pm 2.64, 1.90, 8.50)$.

Visual 11.7 shows several families of surfaces. The surface in Figures 2 and 3 is a member of one of these families.

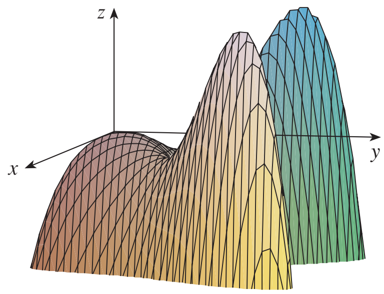

FIGURE 2

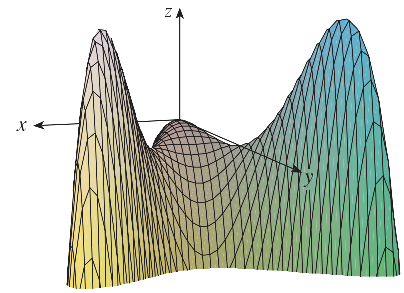

FIGURE 3