

Three elements of a great landscape

<http://photonaturalist.net/three-elements-of-a-great-landscape/>



Photo by Steve Berardi

Have you ever wondered why some landscape photographs look so much better than others? Maybe some landscapes look dull or flat to you, but you don't really know why. Well, perhaps the photo was missing one of the three elements of great landscapes: a **foreground**, **background**, and **perfect light**.

Below are a few tips for capturing these three elements, so you never get a flat looking landscape again.

Foreground

The job of the **foreground is to lead the viewer's eyes into the background**. It doesn't have to be particularly amazing (as long as the background is)—just pick **something that contrasts well with the background**.

If there are any large or notable objects in the foreground (i.e. flowers, big rocks, trees, etc), **do not put them in the center of the frame**—put them off to the side (**follow the rule of thirds**). The photo above would have looked very weird if the large rocks in the foreground were centered, instead of being off to the sides.

Background

Usually, the **background is the most dramatic part** of a landscape photograph.

It's essential for the **background to have perfect light glowing on it**. Otherwise, the background won't stand out much from the foreground, or it may look flat and unsaturated.

Perfect Light

Obviously, your photo **needs perfect light!** How do you get it? Well, you're gonna have to **wake up really early**, or **stay out late** (and probably miss the normal dinner time).

The most **perfect light for landscapes occurs twice a day:**

- once around sunrise and
- once during sunset

It happens at this time because the Sun is so low on the horizon which causes its light to travel through more of the atmosphere than it does at high noon—making the sunlight much softer, and less harsh.

Usually, the **perfect light begins about 15 minutes before sunrise/sunset** and **lasts until 20 minutes after the sunrise/sunset**.

The sunrise typically casts a cooler (blue) light, and **the sunset always casts a very warm (red) light**.

The most common mistake

All great landscape photos will have these three elements present, so remember them the next time you try capturing that beautiful light in the desert!

Many people **forget the foreground**, and are left with a photo lacking depth. The **foreground doesn't have to be amazing**, it **just needs to be there!**