

## LANDSCAPES WITH THREE DIMENSIONS

This lesson is based on information in an article in Popular Photography Magazine from March 2002 by Tim Fitzharris.

Landscape photos are often a disappointment because they tend to look flat. This is because the three dimensions of the real world often do not translate well to the two dimensions of a flat piece of film. We see the world through stereoscopic vision because of our two eyes, but the camera records the scene through a single lens. We can decrease this problem by adding visual cues that express depth.

The relative size of landscape features is one of the most obvious cues in conveying depth and scale. Objects that are close to us appear larger than similar objects farther away. So you can find similar objects and position them in a photo so that they appear on film in different proportions. You can use trees, wildflowers, rocks, animals, etc.

There are other common objects that can be used as size cues, including clouds, sand ripples, and waves that present a uniform pattern of decreasing size. From the right camera angle, rivers, dune ripples, and fallen logs show converging lines meeting in the distance like railroad tracks.

When used with size cues, a wide angle lens creates a powerful perspective effect by emphasizing the differences between size cues. Telephoto lenses have the opposite effect by compressing the distance between elements. Remember to use the smallest  $f$  stop you can to increase your depth of field.

Another perspective tool is overlapping. To avoid blending areas, only overlap simple areas of contrasting color, brightness or shape. Some of the most effective overlapping can be done with intersecting diagonal landscape planes, especially with dramatic lighting.

Try using side lighting, which make it easier for the viewer to identify size cues and other spatial relationships in the scene. When the atmosphere is hazy, close objects appear sharper than distant objects creating an effect known as aerial perspective. Sometimes you can combine contradictory spatial cues to confuse the viewer and create an interesting effect.

One of my favorite methods of creating depth in photographs was not mentioned in the article. That is, look for alternating areas of light and dark. This is most effective early and late in the day when the sun is low in the sky.

The article includes many other tips on adding depth to your landscape photos, but many are so rare that the author actually states that you may never find them.