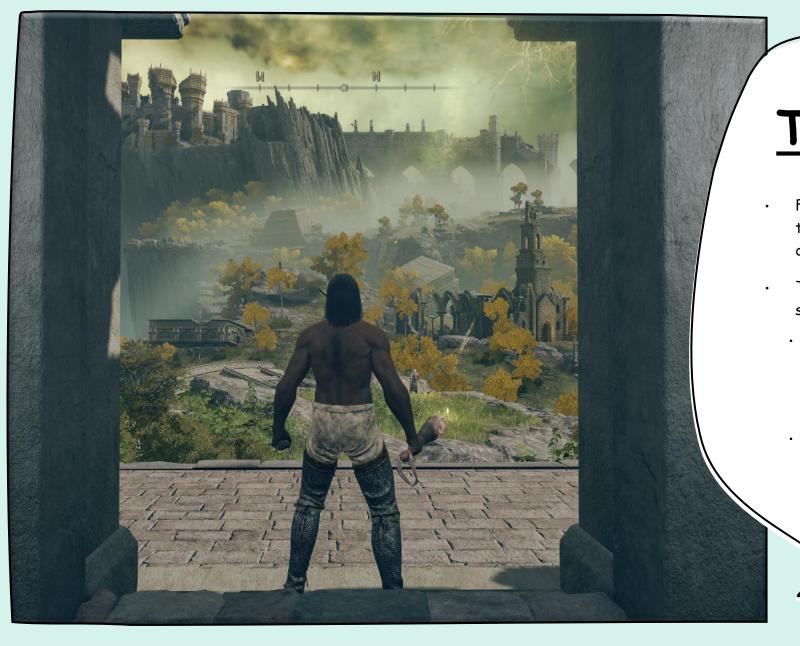




View from The First Step



The First Step

- Following a short and dimly lit tutorial area, the player follows an elevator to a heavy door that leads to the outside
- This is the player's point of view as they slowly open the door
 - Before even walking outside, the player can see two major points of interest (Church nearby and Castle in the distance)
 - As well as this, there is a glowing light directly ahead that signifies a checkpoint (Site of Grace)



- Exiting a claustrophobic, dark cave level into this beautifully lit expanse creates a sense of awe for the scale of the game and entices the player to really begin their journey and explore There is clear design intent to impress the player with the massive space and coax them into traveling towards the Erdtree, while keeping it clear that the player can do as they please

 The Erdtree is a recurring and permanent landmark throughout most regions of the game, always giving the player a sense of direction and grounding, another great design choice



- The First Step, Tree Sentinel, and The Church of Elleh Church of Pilgrimage Stormveil Castle

- The Erdtree The Divine Tower of Limgrave The Forge of the Giants The Gatefront Ruins

Player Guidance



- Immediately upon exiting, the player will most likely notice two NPCs in sight as well
- This design choice likely was meant to encourage the player to move in this direction, as well as investigate
- One stands nearby the Site of Grace and wears rags, while the other is a massive patrolling knight in the distance
 - These design choices are probably meant to be distinct and clear indicators to approach these NPCs differently





Forge of the Giants

- FromSoft designers recurringly place major areas in view of each other in some way, shape, or form
- New open world capabilities -- no instancing or loading screens
- Past Souls titles simulated this with lower resolutions and strategic loading screens
- Now, as a true open world game, Elden Ring goes far beyond the past Souls games in this design aspect



Focused Analysis: View from The First Step

· Visual Components

- Overall Aesthetics: High Fantasy visual style with heavily contrasting elements, i.e., nature and ruins, darkness and brightness, jagged stones and fields of green, clarity and fog
- · Color Palette: Green, Orange and Gold (nature and light) as well as dark Blues and Gray (ruins, buildings and fog)

· Layout/Structure

- Spatial Arrangement: Plenty of open space littered with ruins that go beyond the forests and towards the castle. Negative space on the left side, pointing players forward
- **Key Landmarks**: Where do I begin? **List** from earlier Elden Ring often lets the player see their future landmark locations, and it does this fantastically (environmental teasing)

· Player Guidance

- · Navigation Cues: Site of Grace, as well as the directional light trail it produces, the Church, Stormveil Castle, Erdtree
- · Pathways/Barriers: Previously mentioned negative space as the cliff drops off on the left, the Tree Sentinel, the massive open space and lack of knowledge

· Interactivity/Gameplay

- · Interactive Elements: In this screenshot, just the Site of Grace and NPCs in view are interactive
- · Objective Indicators: All the landmarks and NPCs

Focused Analysis: View from The First Step (cont.)

· Environmental Storytelling

- · Narrative Elements: Ruins and debris among nature suggest a post disaster setting, a mysterious old world, though it is still inhabited
- Atmospheric Details: Stormy, dark skies brew above, though nature thrives below, as the storm clouds are concentrated over the castle. Ambient winds and particles, as well as foliage sways make the environment feel alive. A massive light filled tree towers above the world, contrasting with the dark ruins of Limgrave

· Technical

- Lighting/Shadows: In this screenshot, the tree seems to be the source of light rather than a Sun or Moon, as it's light pierces through the storm clouds. Lighting and weather effects change dramatically based on where the player is in the story AND based on location
- Texture Quality: In my opinion, the environmental textures in Elden Ring are as they should be (they're not amazing and they're not bad). The art style makes up for what the texture quality and fidelity lack.

· Conclusion

· Based on the screenshot of the 'View from The First Step' and this analysis, Elden Ring's level design seems effective



THE END