

It's not cool to admit you're lonely in London, but in the country it's easier to make friends

With a bit of effort (and a few pottery classes), Katie's beginning to feel little more at home

By Katie Glass 2 January 2021 • 6:00am



'It's fun exploring, but I wish that I had someone to do it with.' PHOTO CREDIT: Jooney Woodward

Making plans for the house consumes most of my time: finding furniture on Facebook Marketplace, fantasising about where the hot tub will go, working out what to do about [the heating 'situation'](#).

I learn more than I thought possible about ways to heat a house using oil or solar or air-source heat pumps. I phone Rayburn specialists who talk for hours about running radiators off a stove. Still, I'm tempted to just keep only wood-burning stoves. It also seems romantic. 'I'll give you one winter of chopping logs and let's see how romantic you think it is then,' the Rayburn man laughs.

On days off, I drive the curving coast road from Sennen to St Ives, past cattle grazing in fields chequered by ancient Cornish hedgerows. Or head south to The Minack Theatre, carved into rocks over Land's End. I explore the crumbling ruins of Botallack mine 'Cornwall's answer to Machu

Picchu,' I tell my friend Rob, trying to tempt him down. It's fun exploring, but [I wish that I had someone to do it with](#).

It's hard to know how to go about making new friends as an adult. In London, people judge you by who you know, which is why everyone pretends to be best friends with someone they bumped into once.

It's nice that Cornwall feels less pretentious. Here social hierarchies aren't based on fashion, but pragmatically built: on fishing families going back generations, tin-mining clans, local business owners who've become respected 'faces', farmers whose grandfathers worked the same land. There are also blow-ins like me.

On local Facebook groups I find some animosity towards 'emmetts' – incomers from Up Country, (derived from the word 'ant', apparently). Particular irritation is directed at DFLs (Down From Londons) buying houses at extortionate prices. Am I one of them? I didn't come from London originally, but perhaps I became one of the bad guys without realising it?

I decide to throw myself into anything to meet people; circling activities in The Cornishman. I sign up to a pottery class (despite how hopeless I am at art) and start volunteering at a local community farm (where they don't seem to mind that I don't know what I'm doing).

I email L, a journalist living nearby. In London, it's not cool to admit to being lonely. Here I'm just honest. 'I don't have any friends!' I tell her. She is kind: taking me walking to a hidden cove that locals keep secret from tourists, where we chat on rocks over breaking waves.

She introduces me to H, an artist, who invites me to tea in her studio perched over Newlyn harbour. We smoke cigarettes under her vast oil paintings of fishermen.

I worry about meeting people, but while I'm worrying it just happens, in a way it rarely did in London. Here I see the same faces walking the same dogs, going to the same shops. I chat to Emma who owns the café, where I run into Suzy, who invites me on her morning swims (there is no way I'm going while it's 10C). Although making friends will take time, there is something else here: community.

I start mentoring journalist students at Falmouth University and one day, as I drive back from campus, I have a new feeling – a thread of a connection. Like I'm coming home. Somewhere that once felt like the middle of nowhere now feels like somewhere I could belong.

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