

Am I living the seaside dream, or am I just a cliché?

Now safely ensconced in her Cornwall fisherman's cottage, Katie is wondering where she fits in

By Katie Glass 6 February 2021 • 6:00am



Katie Glass: 'After months trying to buy my dream country house, I'm devastated to be back at square one'
PHOTO CREDIT: Jooney Woodward

My fisherman's cottage is [every fantasy I had as a child](#) of living in a Wendy house, except it is more tastefully decorated with Farrow & Ball grey wooden stairs, white beams and a large wrought-iron bed, which I can sit in drinking tea looking out to St Clement's Island.

My friend L's daughter is delighted by it. She finds excuses to skip over, bringing me messages from L and delivering 'essentials': fairy lights and a mug she won at St Ives' arcade. She sits by the window chatting, drinking sparkling elderflower cordial.

[Village life is poles apart from the remote country life](#) I had planned when I left London. Still, I like the warm rhythm of it, nodding to people I know in the post office, seeing H out walking her dog, dropping by L's, leaving little gifts – some flowers, a cake. I wish Dalston had felt this safe. I'm

surprised by the way strangers start conversations on the beach, which is a change from worrying about catching someone's eye on the Tube.

Here your life overlaps with your neighbour's. We bump into each other under the archway leading to my cottage, passing in the shared courtyard, coming back with shopping or huddled there at night, smoking out of the rain.

In the morning I stumble to the kitchen half-dressed to find people peeking in my windows, or am startled by the fat backside of a horse swaying past.

L and I take walks on the beach where she introduces me to the village mums, a mix of blow-ins and locals. I like the latter most, with their funny stories about dating fishermen. I learn gossip about my neighbours, including that Mick Fleetwood's sister lives here, which makes me laugh because by now I should have been walking down the aisle to You Make Loving Fun. It's hard not to fall in love with Mousehole, which Dylan Thomas called 'the loveliest village in England'. I lose afternoons exploring its warren-like lanes of ancient limewashed cottages, dappled walls built from granite, rocks piled up or lain in slabs to form stairs that climb buildings or curl to the sea.

The village feels cutesy, with its tiny blue and white doors and ivy coloured balconies, but it was purposefully built, formed by a fishing industry hinted at in names of cottages: The Wheelhouse, The Old Pilchard Press, The Net Loft, where fishermen hung their nets to dry.

Still, Mousehole is now a fishing village with no fishermen in it. Seagulls perch on lonely fishing boats bobbing in the harbour. It is Newlyn – down the coast – where the real fishing takes place, where boats cram the harbour serving the market and fishmongers and fishermen crowd into the legendary pubs: The Swordfish and the Star Inn. I walk past peering in the windows, waiting for them to open again.

Now the fishermen mostly live up the hill in the modern prefabs of the Gwavas estate. Their Mousehole cottages turned into fishing-themed holiday lets, leaving the village with an unreal quality to it. I pass dark windows of empty houses wondering where I fit into all this.

[Am I a tourist living here?](#) A cliché escaping the rat race? A newly local Londoner in a holiday let, trying to make a home while pushing up property prices? Just another posh girl dreaming of getting off with a fisherman?

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