

Wiltshire Village Strains Under Tourist Numbers

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Castle Combe in Wiltshire, often hailed as one of England's prettiest villages, is struggling to cope with a growing influx of tourists. While its picture-postcard charm continues to attract visitors in large numbers, many residents say the quiet life has been overwhelmed.

Just 12 miles from Highgrove, the countryside home of King Charles III, Castle Combe draws an estimated 150,000 tourists each year. But the village's narrow lanes, lack of

parking, and absence of public amenities have made this surge increasingly difficult to manage.

Locals have described mounting disruption, including traffic congestion, blocked driveways, and a loss of everyday tranquillity. While some businesses benefit from tourism, residents feel their quality of life is being eroded.

“It’s beautiful here, but we don’t live in a museum. Tourists treat it like an attraction, not a functioning community.”

Castle Combe’s infrastructure was never designed to accommodate this level of tourist activity. Public services are under pressure, and there are concerns about safety on the narrow roads during peak periods. Despite this, no significant upgrades or regulatory measures have been introduced.

The issue reflects a broader problem affecting rural heritage locations across the UK. While these areas are frequently promoted in national tourism campaigns, local communities are often left without meaningful support or planning protections.

Although governments past and present have acknowledged the need to protect such villages, little has materialised. Under the current Labour leadership, residents say there has been no substantial progress in addressing rural over-tourism or its effects.

“We want visitors to enjoy the village but not at the expense of those who live here every day.”

Residents have repeatedly called for modest but vital changes such as resident-only parking schemes, improved signage, and limits on coach traffic, to preserve their way of life.

There is growing concern that without intervention, the very qualities that make Castle Combe appealing could be lost. Locals warn that if current trends continue, tourism may not just threaten the village’s serenity, but also displace the very community that sustains it.