

Fill in the gaps with the words from the box:

plunge backwater outdoorsy in the sticks the icing on the cake idyll
derelict the backbone few and far for all intents and purposes dismal at one with

Heather Long



A couple of years ago, I took the _____ and moved from London to a tiny village in the heart of the countryside, and it's been one of the best decisions I've ever made. I've found my rural idyll.

I've always been an _____ type, so living in the country suits me perfectly. I love going for long walks in the woods, especially at this time of year when the leaves are changing colour and there's a nip in the air. And in the summer, a swim in the river is _____. I'm also lucky enough to have a garden, and I spend hours pottering around, planting flowers, and growing vegetables. There's nothing quite like feeling _____ nature.

Another thing I love about living in the countryside is the sense of community. In a small village like mine, everyone knows everyone else and people often pop round for a cup of tea and a chat. When they ask "How are you?", they genuinely mean it. No one cares what brand of clothing you are wearing, or how much money you make. You are accepted for who you are, not for what you do. The local pub is _____ of social life here and it's where everyone gathers to catch up on the latest news and gossip. _____, it's the village living room.

Of course, country life isn't without its challenges. The nearest shop is a good ten miles away, so you have to be organized and plan your shopping trips carefully. But for me, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks.

Jessica Reed

I grew up in a rural _____, right out _____. There were hardly any shops or amenities, and the ones that were there were _____ or run-down. The school was tiny, and there wasn't much for young people to do.

The jobs were _____ between, so almost everyone commuted to the nearest town, which was about an hour away by car. My parents both worked there, but with that came bigger utility bills and petrol bills have rocketed in recent years, so they struggled to make ends meet. The commuting became a huge burden on them, and they were always tired and stressed.

As I got older, I began to feel the disadvantages of "rural _____" even more strongly. Life revolved around making sure the fridge is fully stocked - you can't just nip to the corner shop if you run out of milk or bread. The winters were long and dark, especially the first _____ dispiriting days of December. I also started to begin to miss the anonymity of the big city; everyone knew everyone else's business, and there was nowhere to go where you wouldn't bump into someone you knew. So, once I could fend for myself, I was off like a shot and never looked back.

