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## After the floods... The **Somerset Levels** do need you – but not yet

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After the floods: Glastonbury

Tor. The media coverage has focused on the plight of farmers, but the area also depends heavily on tourism.  
Photograph: Peter Adams/Getty Images

West Country police recently had to warn "flood tourists" to stay away from the Somerset Levels. Travelling to gawp and take photos as people's homes and livelihoods are washed away must rank as a niche tourism sector, but let's hope the newfound interest in this part of the country won't subside with the floodwaters.

Much of the media coverage has focused on the plight of farmers but the area also depends heavily on tourism. I spent a week in the Somerset Levels last summer and fell completely under its spell. The distinctive flatlands which make the area so vulnerable to flooding are precisely what make magical. Swallows swoop and dive over misty fenlands criss-crossed by rynes (irrigation channels) and the traces of ancient walkways. Over it all stands the extraordinary outcrop of Glastonbury Tor and St Michael's Tower. No wonder the place is synonymous with legends and fairytales.

More recently the Levels have been making their mark as a destination for foodies, with local produce being served and celebrated in beautifully renovated inns such as **The Swan in Wedmore** ([theswanwedmore.com](http://theswanwedmore.com)) or **The White Hart in Somerton** ([whitehartsomerton.com](http://whitehartsomerton.com)), where you can sample the cider, saltmarsh lamb and artisan cheeses, before sleeping it off in one of the decadent bedrooms upstairs.

"Flood tourists" are not what Somerset needs right now but when the waters recede and the camera crews pack up, we can show our support by going there. You'll be glad you did.