



FILEX 12 looks at the impact of tourism within Exmoor National Park. It includes employment and expenditure statistics, considers some of the social implications of tourism and outlines the role of the National Park Authority. See FILEX 10, for 'Recreation on Exmoor.' See also Questex, published by ENPA.

Tourism on Exmoor

Exmoor has long been a tourist destination. Like most tourist areas in Britain it was 'discovered' by tourists in the late 18th century (1790's) when the Napoleonic Wars prevented wealthy people from taking their usual tours on the Continent. It was not until a century later, however, that public holidays and railways enabled people to come in large numbers. In parts of Exmoor the wealthier visitors didn't like mixing. From the early 1970s there has been a decline in tourism generally in Britain as more people have been able to take their main holidays abroad. More foreign visitors have been coming to Britain, but not as many as British visitors going abroad. The tourist industry has had to become more competitive and more specialised to attract visitors. Exmoor has followed the same trend as the rest of the country but, even though visitor numbers have not been increasing, tourism has become Exmoor's main industry. This is because the 'primary' industries such as farming, forestry and fishing have declined.



Visitor centres are an important source of income for National Park Authorities

Tourism brings with it advantages and disadvantages:

ADVANTAGES

- It brings employment, particularly when other industries have declined
- Tourists mainly come to see the scenery, so there is an incentive to keep the area looking beautiful
- Tourists use services which may not be viable if only supported by local people
- Tourists purchase local produce, supporting other parts of the economy
- Tourism brings grant aid and support which may not be available to other sectors of the economy, particularly for bringing in foreign visitors

DISADVANTAGES

- Tourism development increases the built up area
- Services must be developed to meet with a peak demand in summer whilst facilities may be little used at other times of the year
- Local people have to pay towards services which are provided for others
- It provides low paid, seasonal work with long hours, so many local people cannot afford to live in the area
- Most tourists are car borne, so tourism increases local pollution and energy use for journeys which are mostly unnecessary
- Concentrations of visitors in time and space can bring particular problems such as traffic congestion, path erosion, noise, litter, crime and health problems

It is very difficult to count visitors to a large, open area such as a National Park. Surveys have estimated that there are between 1 million and 3 million days spent by visitors each year to Exmoor. A survey in 1994 estimated that people spent 1.4 million visitor days in Exmoor National Park, making it the least visited of Britain's National Parks although this figure is likely to be underestimated. This doesn't mean that 1.4 million people actually visited the National Park but that between them they spent that number of days there. Going by the 1994 figures, 25% were day visitors. Of the remainder, about 58% were visitors on holiday staying outside the National Park. 17% of the days were spent by holiday makers staying inside the National Park. Of these, 33% stayed for up to three nights and the rest for up to a week or more. About 97% came by car and used their car to travel about the moor. Most of the others travelled by coach or bus. About half of the visitors to Exmoor were found to be merely passing through, many taking the scenic route to another destination.

How tourists spend their money

Table 1 shows how visitors to Exmoor National Park in 1988 spent their money.

Type of visitor/type of spending	Average spend per person per day £/p			
	Day trip	Holiday staying in the Park	Holiday staying outside the Park	All visitors
Transport	1.44	2.58	1.91	1.99
Leisure and Recreation	0.20	0.41	0.42	0.37
Food and Drink	2.08	3.87	2.20	2.76
Shopping	0.93	4.83	2.20	2.63
TOTAL (rounded)	4.70	11.70	6.70	7.80
Accommodation in the Park	0.00	18.90	0.00	6.45
TOTAL (incl. accommodation)	4.70	30.60	6.70	14.30

Being a tourist

The dictionary describes tourists as people who journey about the country for pleasure. On Exmoor, tourists on holiday usually find accommodation for a number of days in one place. This acts as a base from which they can visit other places to see the sights and scenery, buy meals, go shopping and find entertainment. As they do these things they spend money. The money that tourists spend within the National Park creates jobs and provides new incomes for the area.



Tourists hiking across Exmoor

Table 2 shows the percentages of holiday makers staying in different types of accommodation in the National Park.

Type of accommodation	Percentage of holiday makers staying in the Park
SERVICED	
Hotels, guest houses, inns	31
Bed and breakfast, Farmhouse B & B	13
Outdoor activity/training centre	1
Total serviced	45
SELF-CATERING	
Self-catering	22
Static caravan	4
Caravan and camp sites	21
Other	3
Total self-catering	50
Friends/relatives home	5

The greatest single amount spent each day by most visitors staying in the National Park is on accommodation. This means that the people who benefit most from the money spent in the National Park are those who provide accommodation. On average the amount spent on food and drink is the next most important item of expenditure. This includes meals and drinks bought in cafes, restaurants and pubs, plus ice creams and snacks. Domestic supplies and food and drink bought in ordinary shops are included under shopping.

Very little seems to be spent on leisure and recreation. This may be because there are few places of entertainment or big attractions within the National Park although there are several just over the boundary. The sum includes charges for leisure activities like riding, fishing and guided walks or a visit to a local museum. It also includes the purchase of guide books. The low figure indicates that many people are probably enjoying 'free' activities like walking or a day on the beach. Spending on transport includes fares, petrol and car parking.

Table 3: Estimates of visitor numbers to attractions within Exmoor National Park 1998:

Lynnton and Lynmouth Cliff Railway	550,000
Holnicote Estate moorland	276,452
Holnicote Estate woodland	260,348
Exmoor National Park Visitor Centre, Lynmouth	163,784
Watersmeet	139,400
Counstisbury and The Foreland	117,768
Dunster Castle	116,200
Exmoor National Park Visitor Centre, Dunster	113,408
Tarr Steps	85,000

Although most of the revenue from money spent by tourists goes initially to the hotel owner, shop-keeper or cafe proprietor, only a small part of it is net income. Take, for example, a privately run guest house. Out of the money received from guests, the owners will have to pay fixed costs like mortgage instalments, business and council taxes and insurance premiums as well as the variable costs of food, laundry and maybe wages before there is any profit or income for themselves.

Similarly the £35.5 million spent by tourists and day visitors in the National Park in 1988 resulted in a tax-paid net income of 'new money' to the National Park of about £9 million. (It was reckoned that in 1997 only 25p in every pound spent by visitors was retained by the local Exmoor economy.)

Although most of the net income goes to the people providing services for tourists, some goes to District Councils as business rates and car parking charges. In 1995 the National Park gross income from the sale of publications and souvenirs was about £120,000 and from car parks about £8,000, but profit was minimal. 38% of National Park expenditure was spent on information, interpretation and facilities for recreation.

Tourism and employment

The number of jobs created by tourism within the National Park reflects the way that tourists spend their money.

Table 4 gives the number of jobs in tourism in the National Park in 1988 and shows which part of the industry they were in.

Direct jobs include waiters, waitresses, information centre staff and hotel receptionists who are directly involved with tourists. Indirect employment could include builders working on holiday cottages or accountants preparing financial statements for a gift shop.

Table 4. Shows the number of jobs generated by tourism in Exmoor National Park, 1988.

Source: Economic Impact of Tourism in Somerset. SCC 1989. (More recent figures are not available)

Industry	Direct	Indirect	Total
Hotel/Guest House	644	103	747
Private/Farmhouse	673	84	757
Self-catering	218	26	244
Camping/caravan	53	5	58
Restaurants/eating places etc	454	49	503
Shops	257	69	326
Visitor attractions, recreational facilities	342	48	390
Total	2,641	384	3,025

These figures represent a great variety of employment. Some jobs are full time and permanent while others are part time and often seasonal. Much depends on the size of the establishment. For example, a large hotel or restaurant which attracts custom throughout the year will employ several permanent full or part time staff and in the summer employ extra seasonal help. Smaller enterprises such as privately owned guest houses or cafes are likely to be run by the family, again with help at busy times. Many seasonal jobs such as waitressing are regularly taken each year to supplement the family income. Students often take seasonal work. In some cases people cater for tourists in addition to their main work, perhaps owning a holiday cottage which they let to visitors. Farmhouse bed and breakfast or a camp site on the farm can bring in a welcome supplement to a farmer's income.

Some small local businesses such as village shops and garages are kept going by the contribution made by tourists, thus providing services for the community and jobs which might otherwise disappear.

One problem is that because of the seasonal nature of tourism, unemployment tends to rise in the winter months. In the Somerset side of the National Park 409 people were unemployed in January 1993, dropping to 348 in April 1993.

The importance of tourism to the local economy cannot be emphasised enough. It is estimated that between 1980 and 1990 there was a 23% growth in employment in the National Park generated by tourism. Without it many of the smaller communities could die out, depriving Exmoor of the people who make the area what it is.



The Ship Inn, Porlock

Some social aspects

1. The social change

It is not easy to identify changes in the social structure of Exmoor caused by tourism. As we have seen, some young people have had to move away in search of work. At the same time older people from elsewhere have retired to the area. Without tourism to provide jobs for some of the young this trend might have been more pronounced. However, many tourist businesses and properties have been purchased by people from outside the area who have sold their homes in the south-east for high prices. This has forced up local property prices beyond the reach of local people as wages in the area are low compared with the cost of living. Because wages are low some tourism businesses cannot survive in remote rural locations as staff cannot afford to live there or commute a long distance. Many locals have more than one job and work long hours to earn enough.

2. Attitudes to tourists

Tourism has long been a part of the local way of life and tourists are generally accepted and welcomed by local people because of the benefits they bring to the area. People who don't make a living from tourism are sometimes less tolerant, and people moving about the area for work find slow-moving tourist traffic in summer, irritating at times.

3 Crime

There is a major increase in some types of crime during the tourist season, theft in particular. Thefts from cars left in remote places are a problem and are often part of organised crime. A few visitors and workers in the tourism industry from outside areas bring street crime with them. However crime is more generally common in rural areas now, and this is partly due to the population movement and greater mobility.

The National Park and tourism

One of the National Park Authority's purposes is to help people enjoy and appreciate Exmoor's special qualities such as the natural beauty, tranquillity, openness and wildness. While it is not a Tourist Board, the Authority recognises how vital tourism is to the survival of the communities on Exmoor and works to promote the aspects of tourism which will benefit the communities while maintaining a balance between the effects of tourism and conservation of the environment. This is what is known as sustainable tourism.

It is important for the ENPA that people enjoy their visits to Exmoor. If they do, they will want to make sure that Exmoor is protected and even be keen to help look after it. The ENPA puts out information which helps people understand Exmoor and get more out of their visits. It also encourages visitors to think about what they are doing and how it affects the National Park.

The ENPA supports sustainable or 'green' tourism that is 'environmentally friendly' so visitors are encouraged:

- to take part in quiet activities and those which do not damage the countryside
- to walk or take public transport and leave their cars behind
- to follow the Countryside Code
- to buy supplies locally and purchase locally produced products

There are many people who enjoy quiet holidays and are interested in wildlife, so encouraging green tourism should not affect the local economy. The ENPA does not want large holiday camps or theme parks in the National Park but does not mind accommodation in hostels, small camp sites, farmhouses or cottages which are in keeping with the countryside and which often supplement the income of the existing community. The ENPA works with the tourist boards, publicity associations and tourist providers to make sure that tourism in the National Park achieves the right balance.



A quiet day at Tarr Steps. Photograph ENPA



An action packed day at Tarr Steps. Photograph ENPA