

Is the fun going out of motoring? You could be forgiven for concluding that Gordon Brown, rising fuel prices and speed cameras have made it too expensive to drive anything but a family saloon or a people carrier.

As for strolling into a showroom and buying a supercar, forget it. The running costs of a £110,000 Ferrari, Lamborghini or Aston Martin, including depreciation, insurance, finance, tyres and servicing, will be at least £30,000 in the first year. Before you give up on the dream of experiencing the thrills of a supercar, though, we have found some other ways you can get behind the wheel of one in Britain without owning it for as little as £99 a day.

SUPERCAR CLUBS

Supercar clubs are the next best thing to having your own Ferrari F430 on the driveway. In fact some might say they're better. Rather than blowing all your hard-earned cash on one glam motor, for a few thousand pounds a club will give you the keys to a whole fleet of the latest, most coveted metal and without having to spend months on a waiting list.

There are currently a couple of British-based supercar clubs vying for your custom. P1 (www.p1international.com, 01372 374 400) is the oldest, launched in 2000 by Damon Hill, the former Formula One world champion, with one branch based in Leatherhead, Surrey, and another set to open in Cheshire in September. Ecurie25 (www.ecurie25.co.uk, 0207 788 7459) opened just before Christmas and has one base in central London.

P1 boasts the larger fleet, while Ecurie25 offers considerable savings over its rival. Membership of P1 is open to anyone aged at least 25, while Ecurie25 is open to those aged 30-65, although it will make exceptions for those who have sufficient experience and a clean driving record. Drivers with more than six points on their licence should

For most of us, owning an Aston Martin or Ferrari is just a dream – but that doesn't mean you can't drive one when you want. **Emma Smith** finds ways to get the A-list look on a budget

not apply to Ecurie25. Both clubs allow you to register your spouse, or "life partner", as a second driver free of charge.

P1 has an impressive line-up of between 45 and 50 cars, including everything from a Ford GT to a Range Rover Sport and all the Ferraris, Mercedes, Maseratis, Porsches, Aston Martins, Lamborghinis and Bentleys in between. There are up to 250 members at any one time, with a dozen already signed up for P1 North, which will start off with a fleet of 10 cars with a combined value in excess of £1m.

There are two membership options. The entry level option, called Silverstone, includes a

such as the Porsche Cayman S and Lotus Exige, with a sliding scale in between.

Monaco members are allocated 1,000 points annually, Silverstone members have 750. Mileage is capped at 6,000 for Monaco members and 5,000 for Silverstone. A car such as the Ford GT will use up 10-60 points per day. Most members average between 50 and 70 driving days a year and cars can be collected free of charge from Leatherhead (where the member's car can be stored) or two sites in London (near Liverpool Street station and the King's Road in Chelsea). Other deliveries and collections are charged at £2 per mile.

We aim to be like your own personal groom. At the end of your drive you simply drop off your car and we'll make sure it's ready for your next outing

£2,500 joining fee plus an £11,750 annual charge. The higher level, dubbed Monaco, includes the same joining fee, plus a £13,750 annual fee. Cars are then allocated according to a points system, depending on the make and model of car, the season and the day of the week.

The most exclusive cars (group five) – including the Ford GT, Bentley Arnage and Ferrari 575M – use up more points than the group one cars,

Ecurie25, which has 40 members, works along the same lines as P1 but with a smaller range of cars. The current fleet of seven includes a Ferrari F430 Spider, TVR Sagaris, Porsche 911 S, Lamborghini Gallardo and an Aston Martin V8 Vantage, with a BMW M5 set to arrive next month. Cars can be booked online or over the phone and delivered free of charge anywhere within the M25 or collected from the office at Old Street, central London. Deliveries further afield are charged at £2 per mile.

Membership is £7,450 per year plus a one-off £750 joining fee. This gives you 600 points and 5,000 miles, which works out on average as about 35-40 days driving per year. It takes 140 points to have the F430 for a weekend in the summer. There is also the option to pay half up front and the rest in monthly instalments, or a half membership deal for £4,250 (plus the £750 joining fee) that gives you half the points and 2,000 miles.

"Most of these cars would only ever be driven for a few days every year even by their owners," says Erik Fairbairn, a former amateur racing driver who founded Ecurie25 with Flora Heathcote, a university friend.

"Our members can enjoy all the fun of supercars without any of the hassles, hence the name. Ecurie is French for stable and we aim to be like your own personal groom. At the end of your drive you can simply drop

off your car and we'll clean it and take care of it and make sure it's all topped up and ready for your next outing."

The only other thing to consider is insurance. Both clubs include this in their prices. Ecurie operates an excess of £3,000-£5,000 depending on the car, although for an annual payment of £625 you can halve that. At P1 the excess is £2,500-£5,000 depending on the car.

CAR HIRE

For those who just want a supercar to add the fittingly glamorous means of transport to a special weekend away, honeymoon or holiday, a one-off rental is probably the best option.

Prices start from about £1,500 for a weekend with one of the latest models but make sure you can also afford to risk the hefty deposit (which the rental company regards as the insurance excess) and can be as much as £15,000.

Dreamcarhire.com (www.dreamcarhire.com, 0844 800 0195) is based in Oxfordshire and offers a range of supercars for hire from a Ferrari F360 to a Porsche 911 Turbo S, Bentley Continental GT and even a Mercedes McLaren SLR.

Drivers must usually be aged between 28 and 70 and prices for the F360, for example, start from £705 for a weekday or £1,762 for a weekend (Friday afternoon until Monday morning), with weekly rates of about £3,230. All cars are subject to a deposit of £2,500-£3,500.

The SLR is slightly more expensive. To rent the McLaren for a weekend will set you back £5,284 and there is an insurance excess of £15,000. Mileage is limited to 100 or 200 miles per day depending on the car. Vehicles are delivered on a covered trailer at a cost of £1 a mile and the driver will give you a brief introduction to the car and a 10-minute accompanied drive to familiarise you with the vehicle.

"A lot of people hire the cars as a surprise," says Cuan Ryan, the managing director of Dreamcarhire.com. "It's always a great surprise when they roll out of the transporter. It's wonderful to see people's jaws slowly drop."

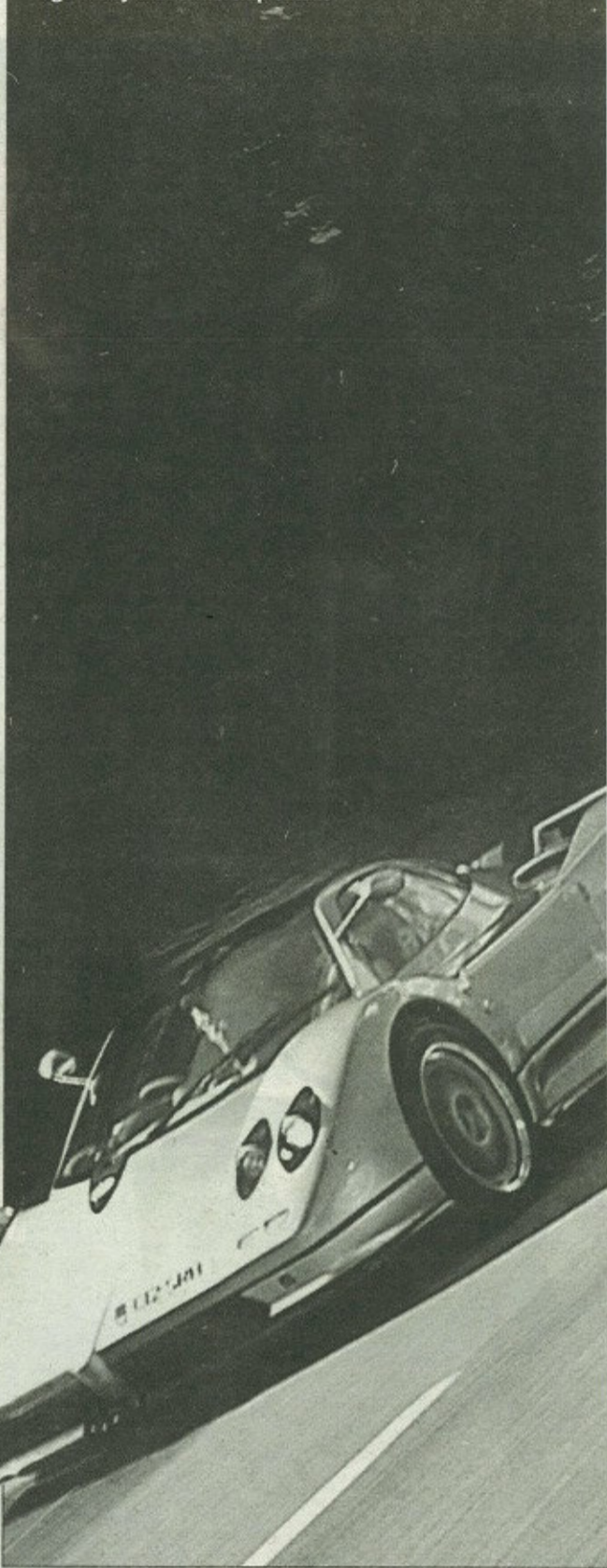
Supercar Experiences (www.supercar-experiences.com, 0845 602 2113), based in St Albans, Hertfordshire, has its own fleet of vehicles for hire and acts as a broker for companies and individuals with cars to hire. Nik Hardwick, who founded the company three years ago, claims to be able to offer at least 60 different makes and models and can deliver anywhere in the UK.

Prices for a weekend range from about £500 for a classic Porsche 911 to £1,500 for a Ferrari F360 or £5,000 for a McLaren SLR, but can vary according to the driver's age, driving record, and so on.

Access is usually restricted to those aged between 30 and 70, with some exceptions, and cars

Alex P

Track days, club membership and rental deals all offer you the chance to drive a supercar without the huge outlay that ownership entails



HASSLE-FREE AND ACTION PACKED

It was the cost of running his Porsche 911 Carrera 4 that prompted Richard Fischer to join a supercar club. The 34-year-old City executive spent £55,000 on the one-year-old 911 in 2004. He sold it in February for £38,000, having spent annually about £1,600 on insurance, £1,000 for replacement tyres and between £250 and £1,000 on servicing.

"I only did 5,000 miles a year," says Fischer. "The

novelty was beginning to wear off. A club is the ideal solution — you can get the latest models so you never get bored."

Fischer joined Ecurie25 in January, paying £7,450 a year (plus an initial £750 fee) and he and girlfriend Clare Sabey, 31, have enjoyed a weekend in Brighton in a Ferrari F430 and another touring Hertfordshire in a Lamborghini Gallardo. "It's something we enjoy together," he says. "You feel

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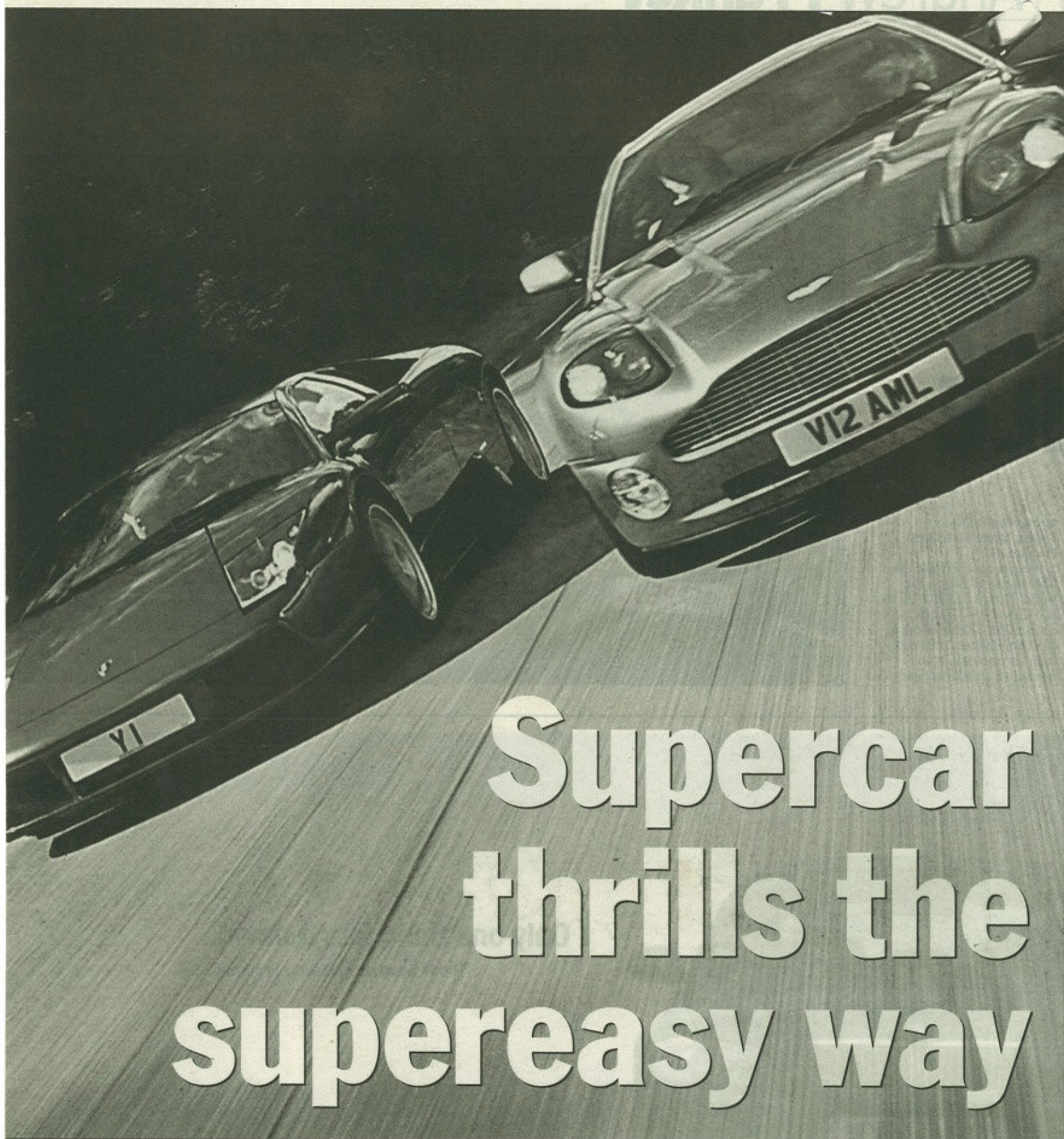


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Supercar thrills the supereasy way

The company is already making plans to get its hands on the new Bond car, the DBS, as soon as everyone's favourite secret agent has finished saving the world in it. Motoring doesn't get much more glamorous.

TRACK DAYS

Track days are more popular than ever now that speed cameras and congestion have made the roads much less enjoyable to drive on. But rather than just ricocheting round in a single-seater, they have become the cheapest way to get your hands on the sort of cars Jeremy Clarkson drools over on Top Gear. Prices start from less than £100 but can go up to more than £1,000, depending on car, location and company.

The Silverstone racing circuit offers a variety of supercar track days, starting from the £99 Supercar Sensation, which allows you three laps around the grand prix track in either a Porsche 911 or Ferrari 355. The chance to drive the Ferrari and a Lotus Exige for 2-3 hours, including tuition, will cost you £220, or it's £155 for just the Exige (open to all drivers aged over 18 who have held a licence for at least a year).

The Supercar Experience will give you access to all three cars for £260 (all prices include insurance). Call 08704 588 270 for more details or go to www.silverstone-circuit.co.uk.

To drive the Ferrari, Silverstone insists participants are over 21 and have held a driver's licence for at least three years.

Rupert Lewin Racing offers the Porsche 911 Experience (www.911experience.com, 0870 350 0911), which includes a whole day of instruction and track time in a race-prepared 911 and a fast ride in a GT2-R.

The days are open to drivers over the age of 25 (although there are exceptions for those with experience), are held in groups of up to 15 at racetracks around the country and cost £1,175 per individual per day (including insurance), with discounted rates for groups over 10. Events are coming up on April 13 at Silverstone and May 8 at Snetterton.

MotorSport Vision (www.motorsportvision.co.uk, 0870 850 5014), owner of the Brands Hatch, Cadwell Park, Oulton Park and Snetterton racing circuits and Bedford Autodrome (venue for corporate driving days), also offers a wide variety of track days. In addition, a host of alternative gift companies all offer their own take on the ultimate driving experience, including Red Letter Days, (www.redletterdays.co.uk, 0870 444 4004); Days to Amaze (www.daystoamaze.co.uk, 0870 240 0635) and Buyagift (www.buyagift.co.uk, 0870 444 2524).

Additional reporting: Jeremy Hart

like multi-millionaires deciding which car to take."

Caroline Davis, 48, an events manager from west London, took part in a Porsche 911 Experience at Silverstone last year with Rupert Lewin Racing at a cost of £1,175. Track days are a way to enjoy supercars if you don't want to pay for car club membership.

"I'd only ever driven sensible family cars before," says Davis. "I loved hurtling round at horrendous speeds."



Supercar club member Fischer with girlfriend Sabey in a Ferrari F430

will not usually be hired to drivers who have less than five years' driving experience, more than six points on their licence, had a ban for drink, drug or dangerous driving in the past 10 years or who have made an insurance claim in the past three years.

Delivery costs £1-£1.50 per mile, you are allocated 100 free miles a day and all subsequent miles are charged at between 50p and £3 a mile, depending on the car. There is a deposit of £500-£5,000.

"People might think it sounds like a lot of money," says Hardwick, "but these are expensive machines. Last year one of my Ferraris was crashed four times and they cost a lot of money to repair.

"The people who hire them

come from all walks of life, from those who have saved up for a once-in-a-lifetime experience or wedding day to those who already have serious money and have just realised it is easier to hire one of these cars than buy one and lose a great deal of money on depreciation."

A company called Aston-Hire (www.aston-hire.co.uk, 0845 8382 007) claims to be able to offer customers the chance to "feel like James Bond". Its fleet includes an Aston Martin Vanquish, V8 Vantage and DB9, with hire costs starting from as little as £329 for eight hours mid-week with a DB7 or £1,668 for a long weekend with a DB9 (plus delivery of £75-£350 and subject to terms and conditions).