

# Fairway to heaven

A golfing weekend in the awesome TVR Sagaris gives **Martin Love** plenty of driving practice



## TVR SAGARIS

£49,995

TOP SPEED: 195MPH

SEATS: 2

GOOD FOR: BLAZING TRAILS

BAD FOR: BLAZER COUNTRY

For most of us, daily decisions usually revolve around food (a lasagne readymade or the remains of last night's shepherd's pie), clothes (novelty T or crumpled office shirt), and rental DVDs (*Nanny McPhee* or *Hideous Kinky*)? For the members of Ecurie25, however, life's dilemmas are more supercharged: a Ferrari F430 Spider for the weekend or the Aston Martin DB9 Volante?

Ecurie25, a supercar club which opened six months ago, is the brainchild of Erik Fairbairn and Flora Heathcote. 'He's the petrol head,' says Flora, 'while I look after the lifestyle side of things.' And what a lifestyle it is. Its aim is to offer the fun, freedom and flexibility of driving a variety of the world's finest cars, without the headache of depreciation, servicing and insurance.

Clearly, such a lifestyle does not come cheap – a year's fees will cost you £8,700. This buys you points which can then be exchanged for driving days. 'Basically,' says Flora, 'a member can expect up to 40 driving days a year' in any of Ecurie25's stable of head-turning motors. In Hollywood terms, these cars are A-list; in playground terms they're alpha kids.

The club is based in London's Old Street, a throttle's blip from the Square Mile, from where most of its members are drawn. To experience at first hand the thrills and frills of belonging to Ecurie25, I've been given honorary status for the weekend.

After much lip biting, I step past the Bentleys and Porsches and opt for a vehicle which brilliantly sums up the club's philosophy – a TVR Sagaris. (It's something you're dying



**Club class: one membership, 25 cars... Ecurie25 is perfect for the curious – and the indecisive**

to drive, but which you'd never want to own.)

If ever a car could be described as tumescent, this is it. With its swollen wings and sculpted bonnet, the Sagaris is in every sense an extreme machine. It's a challenging and uncompromising, Blackpool-built, fibreglass sportscar that's powered by a colossal, gurgling, 406bhp engine. Its twin, right-angled exhausts produce the kind of spluttering boom that makes grown men groan. It does 0-100mph in eight seconds and it's named after a weapon – a Persian battle axe, which seems to sum up TVR's approach.

Ecurie25 specialises in organising weekend driving itineraries and arranges all the reservations its mollycoddled members

may require to fully escape the rigours of corporate leadership. So, to fully appreciate the 'lifestyle' side of its business, Ecurie25 checked my wife and I into Stoke Park golf club, deep in the heart of Buckinghamshire's clinking G&T belt. The stunningly beautiful hotel is where, you may recall, Hugh Grant takes Renee Zellweger for a romantic break in *Bridget Jones's Diary*. It's also where James Bond defeated Auric Goldfinger on the 18th in *Goldfinger* back in 1964. Money, it seems, actually can buy you happiness.

On Sunday afternoon, the door closing on our weekend's escape, we return home.

I hand over the keys of the TVR, pull on my helmet, start up my little Vespa and tootle dreamily back to reality. The lasagne, I think to myself, and maybe *Nanny McPhee*. ★

[www.ecurie25.co.uk](http://www.ecurie25.co.uk); [www.stokeparkclub.com](http://www.stokeparkclub.com)

## INCREDIBLE JOURNEY NICK TRIBE RECALLS A MERCY MISSION IN MALAYSIA

Apart from pumping blood into her, the hospital staff in Mersing, Malaysia, said they could do nothing more for her. I'd have to pay for an ambulance to take us to Johor Bahru for treatment. They told me they didn't buy blood from Thailand, so there was less risk of HIV.

We'd been snorkelling on Tioman island when my friend

Sarah was hit by a speedboat. The impact had shattered her pelvis and then the propeller had cut her open.

Miraculously, no major arteries were severed, but the wound was enormous and life-threatening – you could see her

ribs and her bowels. A nurse sat with us in the ambulance for the three-hour journey, her only role

to change the endless bags of blood as each one emptied. The road was awful, winding and very bumpy – agony for Sarah. I told terrible jokes

and talked utter rubbish, terrified what would happen if she lost consciousness. She knew what I was doing and played along.

We arrived at the hospital and as I stepped out of the ambulance I saw I was covered with Sarah's blood.

That was 12 years ago. ★

Do you have a memorable journey? Send it to us on [journeys@observer.co.uk](mailto:journeys@observer.co.uk)

