

MOTOR homes are vying to replace caravans as a British holiday institution.

There are now nearly 170,000 of them on the road.

And having just spent four days sampling their go-anywhere capabilities, I can see why they've become so popular.

One of their key strengths is simplicity. Unlike with a caravan, there's no hooking up, they don't wobble behind your car and they are easier to reverse.

OK, for the driver of a small car the extra bulk takes some getting used to but you just need to adjust your driving style – and there's little chance of picking up a speeding ticket.

There's no rush because you know you can pull over when you want and there's always a

FEEL AT HOME ON THE ROADS

bed in the back for the night. And you don't have to pay extortionate motorway services prices because you have all your kitchen comforts on board.

For my first motor home experience, I borrowed a shiny new Surrey model from Marquis Motorhomes.

The firm have linked up with top coachbuilders AutoSleepers and van maker Mercedes to create a fleet of top motor homes.

Prices start from around £20,000 up to a hefty £55,000. But, remember, this buys you a mobile second home that can take you on holiday year after year.

And, like with cars, you can start by buying used with prices from less than £10,000.

The Surrey is a four-berth with two above the driver's cab and two settees in the lounge which fold into a double bed.

It is basically a very upmarket Mercedes Sprinter van cab with a slick auto gearbox and a strong 2.2litre turbo diesel engine.

The Surrey is mid-sized for a motor home at just over 21ft long, 8ft 9in wide and 10ft 3in tall. And it's the height that can cause some problems – in strong winds you can get blown about, as I found

out on exposed stretches of road. But, that apart, the Surrey was spot on. I did more than 600 miles and every journey was enjoyable, although occasionally I felt the need for speed to break up the 60mph monotony.

When you arrive at your destination and have hooked everything up, you quickly relax into holiday mode and it's a bit like sitting in a miniature version of your living room at home, just with better scenery.

And unlike at a hotel, if it rains, you can jump into your motor home and keep driving until you find some sunshine.

● For more information visit marquismotorhomes.co.uk.

Hello campers

