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BENIMAR BENIVAN 144

This neat two-berth offers comfortable touring for two at a competitive price, says Peter Baber

Spanish manufacturer Benimar is probably best known for the bright and breezy low-profiles (and occasional overcab) that it makes on a Fiat Ducato or a Ford Transit.

But for the past few years, its sole UK distributor Marquis Leisure has also been bringing in its Fiat-based Benivan van conversions. We checked out how the 5.99m-long two-berth Benivan 144 is looking for 2024.

Running on the 140bhp Ducato engine as standard, the 'van comes with Fiat alloys and a standard Ducato cab with central drinks holders, and you also get cruise control. An auto gearbox is a £4000 cost option.

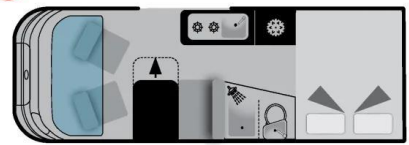
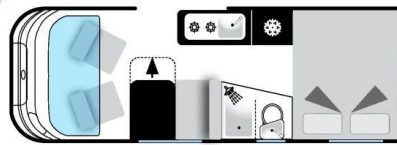
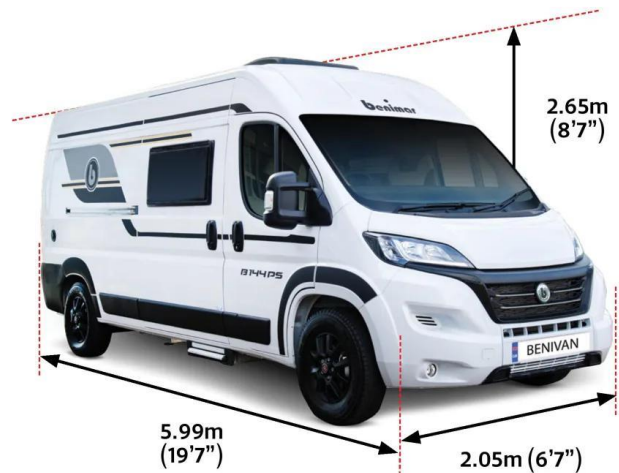
There is no sunroof, so the panel where it would be is taken up with pockets for maps, giving you clear headroom when you get up from the driver's seat and move towards the rear. There is a step to look out for, however, if you are planning to walk to the kitchen.

The absence of any light flooding in from above the driver isn't as stark as you might think, because the toffee and beige upholstery brightens up the interior. There is also a huge Heki above the front lounge, where a clip-on table stands in front of two travel seats in the rear bench.

This table has an extension, and with that fully extended, there is enough room for four people to enjoy a meal with the cab seats swivelled.

The lounge should be snug in the winter, because there are two vents from the Truma heater pumping warm air out into the area under the table, a notorious cold spot that many other van converters don't bother to heat.

Price £56,995
Sleeps 2
Belts 4
Base vehicle Fiat Ducato
Engine 2.2-litre, 140bhp turbodiesel
Length/width/height 5.99/2.05/2.65m (19'7"/6'7"/8'7")
MTPLM 3500kg
MiRO 2853kg
Payload 647kg
Water (fresh/waste) 85/90 litres
Leisure battery 100Ah
Gas 2 x 6kg



Contact Marquis Leisure **Address** Orchard Works, Willersey, Nr Broadway, Worcestershire WR12 7QF **Web** marquisleisure.co.uk **Tel** 0800 026 7777

Two more vents in the step down to the kitchen keep the central aisle and the entranceway warm as well.

The table also clips onto the edge of the kitchen peninsula, for outdoor dining when the weather is fine.

Inside the 'van at night, there is an LED in the ceiling and a striplight under the overhead locker, but there are no spotlights by the travel seats or the cab seats. The sockets for a TV are behind the bench seat, so a set fitted here could easily be viewed by both people sitting in the cab seats.

The kitchen extension is supported by just one plastic stand, so there should be no unnecessary fiddling trying to bring it out. You will almost certainly need it, though, because without it, workspace is fairly limited (unless you include the table).

The worktop includes a reasonable sink, set inline with a two-burner hob. Apart from the daylight coming in through the door and the window, there is a striplight under the locker.

There is a mains socket at the end here, but below it is only a limited

up close



Standard Ducato cab, although you also get cruise control



LEFT There are two heating vents in the step down to the kitchen

RIGHT Fold up the bed and you have room to transport a bike



The shower is separated off by a curtain





1 Swivel the cab seats and extend the table to accommodate four people at mealtimes

2 Compact kitchen is fitted with inline sink and two-burner hob, and UK models will also have an oven (pictured)

3 The rear transverse bed is very comfortable, and lit by swan-neck spotlights for reading

amount of space, where you might be able to perch a small kettle.

The washroom has a proper handle on the door, and reasonable headroom for a van conversion. It's bright here, too, thanks to the opaque window behind the deep handbasin. This does mean that the unlit mirrors have to go further up and on the side, but there is a good towel rail here. There is only one drainage hole in the shower tray, which is separated off by a curtain, but there is a shelf for shampoos and you get a separate shower hose with a riser.

The transverse bed at the back is very comfortable, and reading here will be aided by two swan-neck spotlights.

The bed folds with a seat-belt style clasp to provide space to store a bike.

There is an area under the nearside for storing clothes. You also get two overhead lockers on each side, with a fifth one over the lounge, and a limited amount of storage under the travel seat. But there is no wardrobe.

Kitchen storage in our test model was good – three drawers, one with a cutlery tray, and one clear overhead

locker. We are told that UK models will come with an oven under the sink, replacing one of the drawers.

In the washroom, there is a sizeable locker just above the window.

PRACTICAL MOTORHOME SAYS...

The 144 is at a 'take it or leave it' price that you can't really quibble with. It should give the two of you years of comfortable touring, and could serve as a day-to-day vehicle. A bit more clothes storage might be useful, but the washroom is very versatile.



The water tank can easily be accessed from inside the vehicle



Access to the 'van habitation controls is via the floor



You could possibly stash some small items in here



LEFT Discreet cubby hole under the table

ABOVE No sunroof, but the panel has handy map pockets



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