

REVIEWED

BENIMAR BENIVAN 122



**A campervan that walks the walk –
blending practical touring benefits
with everyday usability**

Words & pictures
Iain Duff



The campervan market is awash with vans promising adventure. Some lean heavily into rugged imagery, others focus on luxury touches. The Benimar Benivan 122 takes a more level-headed approach. It's a van designed for real

people and practical use rather than glossy brochures. The 122 is part of the campervan range of Spanish motorhome brand, Benimar, but there's lots here that will appeal to the British buyer, both in terms of spec and layout.

Despite being manufactured at Trigano's campervan factory in Italy, this 6.36m Fiat Ducato has a typical UK layout of front half-dinette, central galley and washroom, and a rear lounge. The sliding door is also on the nearside, unlike many European campervans. The 122's return to the Benivan range sees it gain a number of improvements along the way, including Isofix and a two-burner Dometic hob.

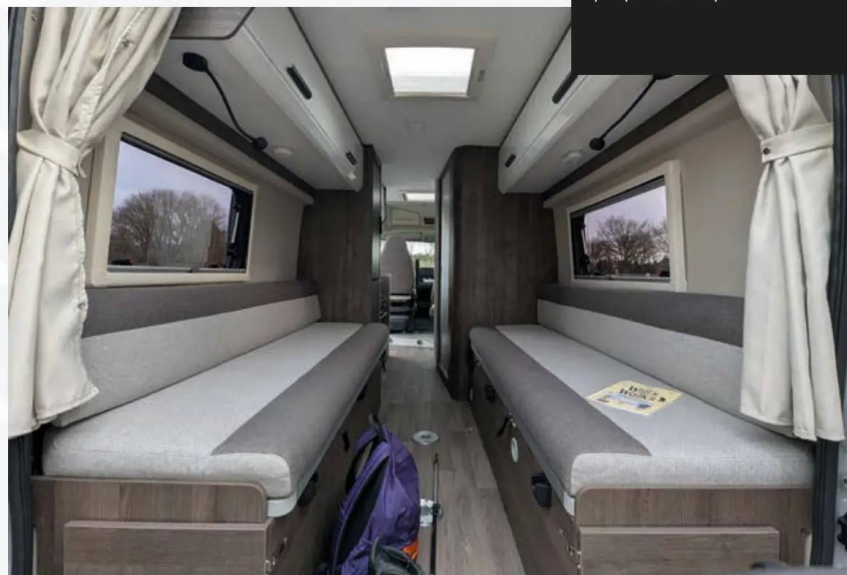
WALK THIS WAY

One of the deciding factors in choosing a campervan is what you are likely to use it for. That might sound obvious, but if you'll primarily be using the van for regular short trips to facilitate a hobby as opposed to long road trips across Europe, you'll have completely different needs.

At the moment, my focus is on hillwalking. Later this

year, I'm walking up Snowdon to raise money for Cavernoma Alliance UK – if I'm going to do it justice and reach the summit, I need some serious prep. So, as part of my training regime, I took the Benivan 122 to Fineshade Wood in Northamptonshire to put it through its paces.

One of the biggest advantages of a campervan for going walking is that it allows you to be exactly where you want to be without the hassle of hotel check-ins/



PROS

- Comfortable interior living space
- Practical layout with generous storage
- Good-value specification

CONS

- Washroom is compact for taller users
- Kitchen has limited preparation space

NEW CAMPERVANS



OTHER THAN THE AUTOMATIC GEARBOX, EVERYTHING ELSE YOU MIGHT WANT IS INCLUDED AS STANDARD, SUCH AS CAB AIR-CONDITIONING AND CRUISE CONTROL

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outs or having to drive home.

Getting ready for your walk, you can stand up, move around, lay your kit out properly and check your route, without rushing or trying to juggle bags in a car park.

Back at the van after the hike, muddy boots come off and go straight into storage rather than messing up a car boot. And after a long walk, a proper shower and warm air make a huge difference.

Instead of hunting for a café, you can make a hot drink immediately – or cook something simple and filling. The Benivan is perfect for all of this, whether you're out exploring on your own or as a couple.

Of course, it's not just about walking trips. The Benivan has plenty of room for carrying all sorts of leisure equipment, with four eyelets on the floor in the rear lounge to keep items lashed down while driving. Or, if you just enjoy getting away and relaxing, it's comfortable enough for that, too.

Sitting at a size that's easy to live with day-to-day, yet spacious enough for proper touring, the 122 aims to be a versatile all-rounder, rather than a niche lifestyle statement.

BACK TO BASICS

Benimar has a reputation for delivering value-

packed vehicles and the Benivan 122 continues that ethos. Let's start with the basics. The 122 is a two-berth van with a spacious rear lounge and front dinette. With prices starting at just under £62,000 on the road via importer, Marquis Leisure, it has a 140hp engine and manual gearbox. An automatic gearbox is available for an extra £2,995, which is perhaps a lot to pay for a more relaxed drive, but for a growing number of drivers, it's become a must-have feature. I was pleased to see the test model was an automatic.

The van measures just over 6.3m long and 2.05m wide (mirrors folded). You won't use it for the weekly supermarket run, obviously, but while it's not as compact as some vans, driving and parking are still relatively straightforward.

The Ducato is generally easy to drive, especially with the automatic gearbox, and it has enough manoeuvrability to cope with the sort of winding, narrow roads you're likely to encounter when you're heading for a day on the hills. There was some rattling from the back (mostly from the oven), but it only became really noticeable when I ventured onto one of those potholed rural roads that only seem to be repaired once in a generation.

For £95, the Smart Drive Pack adds a bundle of



features with a retail value of £999, including a 9in Pioneer touchscreen with integrated reversing camera, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, DAB radio and sat-nav.

Other than the automatic gearbox, pretty much everything else you might want is included as standard, such as cab air-conditioning and cruise control. The leather steering wheel with integrated media controls gives the cab a car-like feel. It all adds up to make a very comfortable driving experience, which is important when you consider how much time you'll spend behind the wheel.

STEP OUTSIDE

Externally, the Benivan 122 keeps things understated. It comes in two colours – Expedition White on the manual and Campovolo Grey if you upgrade to an automatic. There are no wild graphics or exaggerated adventure branding, just clean lines and a neat finish. That's not to say there aren't a few flashy touches – the 16in alloy wheels, for example. The height of around 2.65m allows comfortable standing room inside without feeling overly tall on the road, although, of course, it does rule out access to many car parks.

The rear doors open wide to reveal a generous storage area for bulky outdoor kit or touring essentials. The sliding side door has a flyscreen, an electric step and an entrance light. A 200W solar panel fixed to the roof comes as standard, helping keep leisure batteries topped up on off-grid stays.

ON THE INSIDE

Inside, the Benivan 122's large double-glazed windows and a generous rooflight let in plenty of natural light, while neutral, two-tone upholstery

keeps the interior feeling open and welcoming. The contrasting wood 'Pamplona' furniture is smart.

The front dinette area includes two Isofix travel seats for safe, child-friendly travel, making it possible to use the 'van for family outings even if it's just a two-berth when it comes to sleeping.

The front lounge is created by swivelling the cab seats, forming a comfortable dining and social area for four people. A table with extension provides flexibility – it's small enough to avoid dominating the floor space, but large enough for proper meals.

Storage in the front includes overhead lockers with chrome catches and accessible cubbyholes that keep everyday items within reach without cluttering the 'van. There's a USB charging port in the lounge area, as well as one 12V and two 230V sockets and it comes pre-wired for a coaxial TV aerial. The digital control panel for the Webasto heating and the lighting and water is also at this end of the 'van.

COOKING WITH GAS

In the middle is the kitchen – in addition to the hob and oven, there is a good-sized Thetford refrigerator with a freezer compartment. Even more welcome for many UK buyers is the inclusion of a Can oven and grill, opening up your culinary options.

Typically for a 'van of this size, worktop space is limited but there is a fold-out extension at the end of the kitchen unit which provides extra food preparation space when needed. Kitchen storage includes several drawers and cupboards for cookware and supplies below the sink and a large overhead locker. A small wardrobe is located under the fridge.

On the opposite side of the central passage, behind the sliding tambour door, sits the washroom.

FACT FILE

BENIMAR BENIVAN 122

Price from: £61,995

As tested: £65,085

Berths: 2

Travel seats: 4

Base vehicle: Fiat Ducato 140hp

Length: 6.36m

Width: 2.05m

Height: 2.65m

Gross vehicle weight: 3,500kg

Payload: 595kg (555kg for automatic)

KITCHEN

Cooker: Dometic two-burner hob, Can oven/grill

Fridge: 85-litre Thetford compressor with freezer compartment

BEDS

Rear double: 1.85m x 1.85m (6ft 1in x 6ft 1in)

Alternative singles: 1.85m x 0.60m (6ft 1in x 2ft 0in)

ESSENTIALS

Fresh water: 90 litres (on board)

Waste water: 90 litres (insulated)

Heating: Webasto Air Top diesel blown-air

Gas: 2 x 6kg

Leisure battery: 100Ah

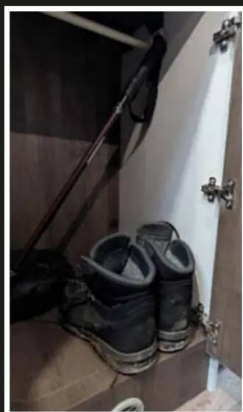
OPTIONS FITTED TO TEST VEHICLE

Automatic gearbox (£2,995), Smart Drive pack (£95)

OTHER OPTIONS AVAILABLE:

Pop-top roof (£5,495)





They don't call this the littlest room for nothing, and, as with most campervans, compromise is inevitable, but Benimar has made smart use of the available space. The all-important shower and riser rail sits to the left and there's a towel rail and shower tray, too. On the right is a space-saving foldaway basin and a 12V flushing loo that can be swivelled to give you more space to move. There's a storage shelf in there, too, for your washroom essentials and a small window with flyscreen.

Taller campers may find showering slightly tight, but for everyday use it gives you a realistic option if you don't want to use the campsite facilities.

BRINGING UP THE REAR

At the back of the Benivan 122 is the spacious rear lounge with bench seats facing each other down each side, with storage underneath. These seats, in the same fabric as the cab and dinette seating, are comfortable, although the backrests do feel quite low. Open those rear doors on a sunny day and bring the outside in.

At night, the lounge converts into either twin singles, measuring 1.85m by 60cm, or a double bed measuring 1.85m square. It's quick and easy to set up as a double – simply slide out the base and move the cushions and it's ready in a couple of minutes. Mattress comfort is good, and decent-sized overhead lockers on both sides provide easy access

to clothing and personal items.

And as there are no lockers above the back doors, you can sit up in bed and enjoy an early morning cuppa, without clattering your head. That's never a good way to start your day! Flexible reading lights, with USB charging ports, are also fitted here. There are blinds and bug screens on all the windows, including those on the rear doors, and in addition there are curtains across the back which provide extra privacy and help keep the heat from escaping.

Speaking of which, heating throughout the 'van is provided by a 2kW Webasto Air Top diesel blown-air system (most rivals boast at least a 4kW heater).

Water systems include 90-litre fresh and waste tanks, offering enough capacity for several days of independent travel. Draining your waste water is straightforward. Unlike some 'vans where you have to fiddle with an awkwardly positioned tap to empty the tank, the Benivan has an easy-to-reach T-handle under the chassis. Access to the gas bottle locker, located under the drive's side couch, is through the rear barn doors.

For those needing extra sleeping capacity, an optional manual pop-top roof, costing £5,495, adds another double bed and transforms the standard two-berth into a four-berth.

EASY LIVING

Overall, I found the Benivan easy to live with. Systems are intuitive, controls are logical and everyday tasks straightforward.

Driving into town doesn't feel daunting and setting up on site takes minutes. It's equally suited to quick weekends away, overnight stops after events or extended tours. Cooking, eating, sleeping and relaxing all have their own defined space.

No campervan is perfect, and the Benivan 122 has a few limitations. The washroom is compact, particularly for taller users. The kitchen, while practical, lacks extensive worktop space, even with the fold-out extension. Optional extras such as the pop-top roof or automatic gearbox can also push the price upwards, so realistic budgeting is essential.

But none of these issues fundamentally undermine the 'van's core appeal which is practical design, reliable comfort and genuine versatility.

It is of course NCC approved, which means it is fully road-ready and safety compliant.

£631.80



INSURANCE

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For quote details:
motorhome.ma/QuoteInfo

VERDICT

The Benimar Benivan 122 is a thoroughly sensible campervan that delivers exactly what most buyers actually need – practical layouts, comfortable touring capability and strong everyday usability. It may lack some of the premium polish of high-end conversions, but its balanced design, decent specification and good price make it a versatile companion for real-world campervan adventures.