



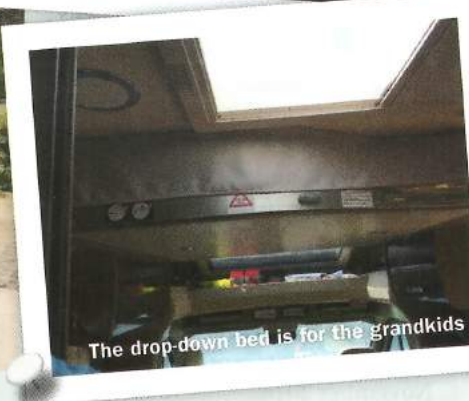
# Owner report

*Brenda & Richard Diggens...* go on the hunt for a motorhome to suit their European and wild camping adventures

## 2017 Benimar Tessoro 494



It's more like driving a car



The drop-down bed is for the grandkids

**W**e are long-time motorhomers, but really stepped up the mileage and adventures when we retired about four years ago. We've done the length and breadth of the UK and a lot of Europe. We travel to the Valencia region of Spain each winter, joining many others doing likewise.

Each autumn we have an adventure, where we travel to new destinations: Croatia in 2015, Denmark in 2016, Greece in 2017.

We tot up about 12,000 miles a year. When travelling long distances abroad we like to take our time and do it leisurely. We use the aires a lot and

campsites occasionally, if we want to settle somewhere a bit longer.

In the UK, we like to use pub stops instead of campsites, preferring to enjoy an evening out and a meal rather than pay expensive site fees.

Our last two motorhomes (in the last five years) have been a Swift Mondial van conversion and an Elddis Majestic 155. The Mondial was great: very manoeuvrable, easy to park and it would climb any mountain easily. Unfortunately, it was just too small for us, especially when we got Tom, our Labrador. We decided to get something bigger with a fixed bed.

In 2014, we thought we'd found just

the right 'van with the Majestic; which had a permanent French bed in the back and a powerful Peugeot engine.

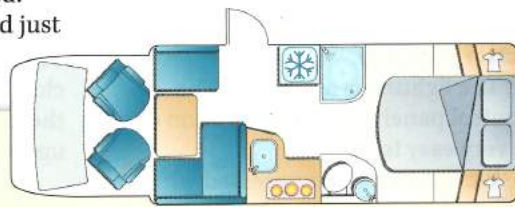
Unfortunately, the quality of finish wasn't what we'd hoped for. The engine was good, but we took it back to the dealer several times for internal problems to be fixed.

The last straw came when the plumbing system leaked and water leaked over the floor.

So, in autumn 2016, we decided our two-year-old Majestic was going to be traded in.

Our driveway dictates the ►

**Price from:** £50,995 **Berths:** 4 **Travel seats:** 4  
**Base vehicle:** Ford Transit  
**Length:** 7.48m **Gross weight:** 3,500kg







The table can get in the way



Our Labrador's perch

*Why we bought it*

We were looking for a better-quality motorhome than our previous one, with a fixed bed, under 7.5m long and weighing less than 3,500kg

*What we love*

The powerful 170bhp engine and comfortable drive, the separate bedroom with its island bed, the roomy fridge and the good-quality finish all round

*How we would change it*

We'd swap the fixed table so as not to restrict access so much and have electric water heating for when we're on site.

*When we buy our next 'van*

We'd probably look for something very similar as we love our Tess, even with her niggles

dimensions and, as we are both approaching 70 in a couple of years or so, we need a motorhome weighing 3,500kg or less.

After a lot of research by Him Indoors, we bought 'Tess', our brand-new Benimar Tessoro 494 in late November 2016.

**RACKING UP THE MILES**

She is 7.5 metres long and weighs in at 3,500kg. She has a 170bhp Ford engine and, on purchase, we had a bike rack fitted for our electric bikes and a four-metre awning on the side. We've done 12,000 miles in a year.

We really love Tess. It's probably the best motorhome we've had. It works really well for the life we lead and the kind of travelling we do: a lot of touring and often not staying on a campsite or with electric hook-up.

The diesel heating works well, keeping us warm through frosty France in January at minus five degrees outside.

The roof solar panels keep the battery charged.

The lighting is abundant. The control panel over the habitation door is very easy to use.

We are also very impressed with the quality of finish on this Spanish

motorhome compared with some of the English ones we've had in the past in this mid-price range.

Him Indoors loves the powerful engine, which easily tackled the Pyrenees in April and the hairy Greek mountains in September. He says it's so user friendly it's like driving a saloon car rather than a motorhome, and we feel it is much better than the Fiat and Peugeot base vehicles we've had.

The dashboard is cleverly thought out with a well to house the sat-nav and a hidden socket point for the lead; no sat-nav wires trailing about. We love the USB power points over the cab for charging phones on the move and the good storage for maps and books.

**ISLANDS IN THE STREAM**

The internal layout works really well for us, especially the full bedroom with its comfortable and accessible island bed: no mountaineering or clambering over each other to get into bed. There are plenty of cupboards for clothes and a handy deep store under the bed, which is accessed by folding up the mattress.

The bedroom is accessed through the shower and bathroom area, which



Bedroom storage is good

can all be closed off for privacy. It's all very stylish with black and white trimmings and clever use of space, a shower on one side and the sink/toilet area on the other.

The shower is good and comfortable to use; fold-out doors seal off the area while in use and, so far, the water has stayed where it should. The washbasin is a clear plastic bowl fixed on top.

There are useful cupboards here, a full-height, slide-back one behind the middle mirror which takes all our medicines, pills and potions, etc, plus another smaller cupboard near the basin for toothpaste and such.

Tess likes her mirrors! There is a large nearly full-length mirror in the en suite, another over the basin and yet another mirror next to the habitation door. >

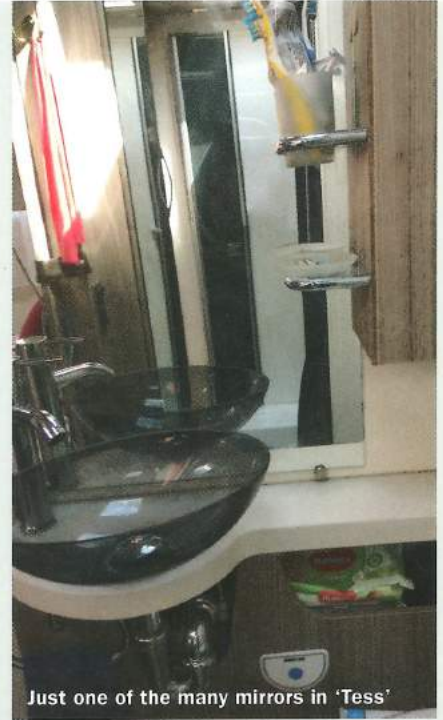




Small, but perfectly formed



The shower works well



Just one of the many mirrors in 'Tess'

## LIVING IN THE WILD

The kitchen is small, but perfectly formed. Not much worktop space but there is a good-sized cupboard for food, a cutlery drawer and overhead lockers for crockery. The gas three-ring cooker can be half closed off from either side to allow more working surface. There is a full gas oven with a grill, but no microwave.

The fridge is very impressive and roomy: a good-sized main fridge and freezer compartment plus a pull-out drawer underneath, which holds up to 12 bottles of wine or, in our case, milk, water, wine and other stand-up items.

The living area is very comfortable for the two of us. The two cab seats turn to face the rear and the table. There are two forward-facing passenger seats for our grandchildren to travel with us occasionally, plus a side bench next to the door, which our Labrador has claimed. There is optional extra seating around the table as the forward-facing passenger seat cushion can be changed to make an L-shaped arrangement, allowing up to six people around the table.

I find the table an issue. It's solid and fixed to the floor with a wide pedestal. It can fold to half-size for travelling and can be repositioned on its pedestal. When the front cab

seats are set for driving, the gap between the driver's seat and the table is narrow when squeezing through. We've tried repositioning the table to maximise this gap, but it's still narrow.

I also find it quite difficult to get under the table to clean because the pedestal blocks the access. You need to be either a very thin person or a contortionist to reach under the table.

*"It's probably the best motorhome we've ever had"*

Over the living area is a pull-down double bed, accessible by a ladder, with safety nets around; very exciting for the grandchildren to use. It does lower the ceiling in the lounge so, with grandchildren in bed, it's not easy to use the living area or watch TV. There is a 150kg weight recommendation, so it's OK for grandkids and lightweight adults but maybe not for Him Indoors and yours truly.

There is good storage space inside Tess with nooks and crannies

everywhere, lockers, the slide-open cupboard in the bathroom area and deep internal storage under the bed.

The electrical circuit breakers are housed under the side bench, as is the gas hot water boiler, leaving some storage there with a handy drop-down door at the side. There is no storage under the front-facing seats as the water tanks are stored there.

A good-sized garage is accessible externally from either side. It goes right across the back of the 'van up to bed height and there is extra central storage under the bed. The bed can be raised from inside the garage for more storage and greater internal height for carrying bikes.

Unfortunately, we've had problems with the pulley mechanism on this, resulting in the bed getting stuck at a crazy angle on our trip to Greece and meaning we had to resort to using wooden wedges to prop it level until we could get to a dealer.

## TEETHING PROBLEMS

Soon after picking her up, we had problems with the external locks. The habitation door wouldn't close without slamming and we couldn't get the garage door locks to pop out to unlock them. The dealer wanted >





Raising bed has caused a few problems



Each side gets its own wardrobe

to assess the problem first before sending off for new parts.

Time ran out for us over Christmas and it wasn't resolved when we left for Spain. We travelled down with the garage doors unlocked and the habitation door dodgy. By the time we arrived in Spain, the habitation door wouldn't close at all.

The Benimar factory was close by, so we contacted the company and it was excellent. It asked us to photograph the keys then came out to fit new locks on both the habitation and garage doors. We were impressed with the technician, who spent ages adjusting the habitation lock to make it work smoothly. Online we've noticed that other Benimar owners have had problems with locks, so maybe this is an issue with the Tessoro.

The diesel engine needs AdBlue to meet EU emission regulations and the 20-litre tank is accessed below the diesel filler point.

The manual says the engine should do 6,000 miles on a tank of AdBlue, but we had problems coming back through the Pyrenees in April after

only 2,500 miles.

The engine management system said the exhaust was being cleaned, followed by an AdBlue malfunction message warning us to get to a garage.

Tess then went on 'limp mode' through Andorra, not appreciated by the mad Andorran drivers behind us.

We stopped for lunch and when we started again the messages had gone and we continued homeward. Travelling home, though, we had a message saying the oil needed changing, which should only happen after about 20,000 miles.

Back home, our local Ford dealer rang Ford and was told to increase the oil capacity of the engine and install a new dipstick.

He said the AdBlue malfunction message in Andorra was also related to the oil capacity issue.

However, we've continued to get oil change warning messages on our recent Greek holiday and Tess is booked to go back into the Ford garage again. We also need to have the bed's pulley mechanism sorted out by the dealer also. **MMM**

## FACTS AND FIGURES



### PRICE

Price new today: £57,745  
Price of similar aged 'van today: £50,995



### BASICS

Berths: 4  
Travel seats: 4

Length of ownership: 1 year  
Annual mileage: about 12,000



### DIMENSIONS

Length: 7.48m (24ft 6½in)  
Width: 2.3m (7ft 6½in)

Height: 2.89m (9ft 6in)  
Gross vehicle weight: 3,500kg  
Payload: 260kg



### BASE VEHICLE

Type: Ford Transit 2-litre, 170bhp

Engine: Euro VI engine with six-speed gearbox

Fuel economy: about 28mpg



### BEDS

Island bed: 1.90m x 1.39m (6ft 3in x 4ft 7in)

Drop-down bed: 1.90m x 1.39m (6ft 3in x 4ft 7in)



### RUNNING COSTS

Base vehicle service cost: N/a  
Insurance: approx £450

Habitation service: approx £250pa  
Road tax: £252pa (by monthly direct debit)

### OPTIONS

Accessories added: Bike rack and 4m awning - approx £1,000

What we've changed: Tess carries only one 13kg Calor Gas bottle, so we had an LPG refillable tank fitted for about £400

### WHAT WENT WRONG

Many of the locks have given, and still do, give us problems. The engine management warning system showed an AdBlue system malfunction after 2,500 miles followed by an oil change warning messages after about 3,000. Ford recommended that the dealer should increase the oil capacity of the engine and install a new dipstick to cure both these problems. The pulley mechanism to raise the island bed got stuck.

## WANTED

Want to earn £250 for writing about your motorhome? Send up to 1,700 words • Info for 'Why we bought it', 'What we love', 'How we would change it', 'When we buy our next 'van' and details for our facts and figures panel • Ten or more photos, including one of yourself.

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