

Benimar Benivan 120



If you want to feel like you're always on a Mediterranean holiday then a Spanish campervan could be the answer...

With Benimar being a Spanish brand, you'd expect its first ever van conversion for the UK to follow a familiar floorplan for imported campers – half-dinette up front, fixed bed to the rear. But, whilst its highly successful motorhomes are all built in the sunny climes of the Mediterranean, at Peniscola, its new Benivan models hail from the slightly less glamorous location of Grimsby, north Lincolnshire.

So, the two Benivans available in the UK, through the 12 Marquis outlets in England, plus the company's partners in Scotland and Ireland, are as British as fish and chips. Not only are they built here but they adopt UK layouts borrowed from Auto-Trail. This 120 is the smaller of the two, based on the 5.99m long-wheelbase panel van.

Of course, it's a Fiat Ducato that provides the starting point, which offers internal dimensions ideally suited to campervan conversion, including the possibility of transverse sleeping.

While Fiat has also announced new engines for next year along with a new automatic gearbox, for the moment, the Benimar 120 still comes on the 150bhp unit as standard – our favourite Fiat Euro 6b motor on account of its generous torque output. You can also opt for an automatic gearbox but that's the only option, as the Benivan comes comprehensively equipped.

Despite the enticing £43,995 price tag, this camper also features a DAB radio, cab air-conditioning, cruise control, sat-nav, reversing camera, cab chairs with twin armrests and height adjustment, 16in alloy

wheels, a colour-coded front bumper, cab blinds, a leather steering wheel with radio/phone switches and even automatic headlights and windscreen wipers – all without paying more. The only economy seems to be the choice of colour – or lack of choice. It only comes in white.

Inside, there's a similar omission of options but the 120's classic two-berth design with a spacious rear lounge remains a top seller amongst couples who have no need of rear travel seats. The conversion has NCC approval and a specification that includes a fitted microwave, an underslung 25-litre gas tank, a 100W solar panel and Truma Combi 4kW gas/electric heating.

Up front, both cab seats swivel, while a convenient low-level cabinet on the offside makes a useful surface for enjoying a cup of



Benimar 120

Base vehicle Fiat Ducato

Travel seats 2

Berths 2

Maximum weight 3,500kg

Payload 600kg

Length x width x height 5.99m x 2.05m x 2.54m

Price from £43,995

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tea. The kitchen has a combined hob and sink unit in stainless steel and the worktop area at the forward end is supplemented by a hinged flap adjacent to the sliding door. The very light cabinetwork colour (called Mole) increases the feeling of space.

Opposite the galley, the washroom includes a swivel cassette toilet, fold-down basin and mirror-fronted storage cabinet, and a wall-mounted showerhead.

However, the rear lounge is the reason to buy this 'van. The long settees give room for up to six to sit and natter, and scatter cushions are supplied for when there are just two of you and you want to stretch out with your feet up.

At night the area converts into a transverse double bed (there's no single bed option), with dimensions of 1.86m by 1.40m.

The Benimar lowdown

This Spanish maker developed a strong following here in the late 1990s and early 2000s based on great value for money, primarily with its Europe and Europe Top overcab motorhomes. It then disappeared from the UK scene, before being reintroduced by Marquis in 2014, firstly with Mileo low-profiles on Fiat.

The Mileo range has grown to include a wider choice of layouts as well as overcab coachbuilts, while Tessoro low-profiles added Ford-based models to the line-up. Earlier this year we saw the more entry-level Primero range of coachbuilts on Fiat. Then there is a pair of Benivan van conversions, which are built in the UK by Auto-Trail.

Benimar is owned by the French Trigano Group, which also encompasses

manufacturers including Adria, Auto-Sleepers, Auto-Trail, Chausson, Mobilvetta, Randger and Roller Team, as well as major retailer (and Benimar importer), Marquis.

The Benimar brand is sold throughout the Marquis network, with its 12 outlets covering most of England – from Golden Cross (Sussex), Poole and Plymouth in the south to Preston and County Durham up north.

In Scotland, Benimar motorhomes are sold through Marquis' partners, The Motorhome Company, in Perthshire, while in Northern Ireland, Camper NI is the main dealer there.

The Benimar range imported by Marquis has specification and layouts that have been developed especially for the UK, which includes placing the habitation door on the British nearside.