

Driving the Cabriolet

What Minimag thought of the Cabriolet in 1996:

"The chop-top Mini is every bit as lithe and nimble and because it has decent grip and a low centre of gravity together with wonderfully responsive steering and a raspy exhaust note, you find yourself driving like a hooligan without ever intending to.

"Raising or lowering the hood is simplicity itself. To lower it, you simply unclip the two fastenings at the top rail and fold the hood rearward. The folded hood still appears bulky and cumbersome, though. The Cabriolet's design means that this is a true convertible rather than a targa top, and this all-open feeling is enhanced when the side windows are wound down.

"Roof up or down, the Cabriolet constantly draws attention. It's expensive but few cars can claim to attract so many admirers — at any price. For this money though, we would expect detail finish to be better. The interior looked lavish but the dash panel didn't fit properly, the left-side door rubbed on the paintwork of the windscreen pillar and one of the hood cover studs came adrift. Noise level at motorway speeds reach a level where the radio struggles to compete and makes long journeys tiring, and you need to work the engine hard at times to maintain decent progress. But despite these few niggles, the Mini Cabriolet is a thoroughly appealing little car."

Value

Buy on condition, not year or even mileage. A tatty example in need of a new hood can be picked up for as little as £4000, but expect to pay £6000-9000 for a minter. LAMM versions are scarcer and generally worth more, but all Cabriolets are very rare. If you find a good one, buy it quickly. In 1996 a 1993 car was valued at just £6-7000, so values have actually risen since then.

Which to buy: LAMM or Rover?

The LAMM hood design is not as good as Rover's, so you could end up paying more for a car that is not quite so easy to live with. Rear opening windows are a bonus on the Rover version, but they can go wrong. LAMM has the carburetted engine whereas the Rover has the injected engine, with many enthusiasts preferring the carb version.



The LAMM Cabriolet

When LAMM Autohaus, a German Rover dealer, developed a well engineered and neatly styled convertible conversion of the Mini Cooper for the German market, it quickly came to the attention of Rover. The firm commissioned LAMM to build 75 rhd cars for the UK market in 1991 and Rover's own convertible was closely based on this design.

LAMM's Cabriolet was strengthened underneath along the sills and the main crossmember, while the steel roof was removed and replaced with a folding fabric hood, hinged from the B-post, with clear plastic side and rear windows. It had the Cooper's 1.3 carb-fed engine but the seats and trim were from the plush Mayfair model. The interior also featured a full-width wood dash with three dials, wood trim for the doors and gearknob, a leather-trimmed Cooper steering wheel and a Clarion stereo unit.

The distinctive bodykit featured extremely wide arches and a boxy front and rear bumper design, while Revolution 5x12 alloys wearing wide 175/50 tyres filled the arches nicely. There was only one colour, Cherry Red pearlescent with gold pinstriping along the waistline and a matching dark red fabric hood, and there was Mini Cabriolet badging on the bootlid and LAMM Design decals on each door. The cost of £12,250 was a huge amount at the time but this limited edition was extremely popular and sold out within weeks.

