

Benimar

Tessoro 413

The Ford cab and the instant beds for four are the reasons to buy here



FACT FILE

BASE VEHICLE Ford Transit

PRICE FROM £50,995

BERTHS 4

TRAVEL SEATS 4

LENGTH 6.41m

WIDTH 2.30m

HEIGHT 2.89m

GROSS WEIGHT 3,500kg

PAYLOAD 415kg

If you want a Ford-based coachbuilt motorhome then your options are pretty limited. In fact, you're restricted currently to Trigano Group brands – the French marque, Chausson, Roller Team from Italy and the Spanish maker, Benimar.

There are plenty of reasons to want a Ford, though, in preference to the ubiquitous, market-dominating Fiats (and very closely related Peugeots). Since it first appeared on the motorhome market in the summer of 2014, the Transit has impressed with the way it drives. In fact, even before you turn the key, the cab seems much more modern than its Sevel rivals.

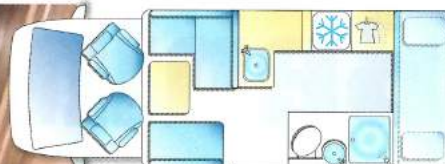
Which, of course, it is, because the Ducato has changed remarkably little since its debut way back in 2007.

So, you sit in a less overtly commercial driving position and the fascia shares much of its design with Focus, Mondeo, etc. That's a good thing.

Even better is the experience once you get rolling. The dash-mounted gearshift is slick, the ride more absorbent than in a Fiat and the Euro VI diesel engines are as good as you'll find in a van. And the new automatic gearbox option (£1,750) is way better than the jerky robotised transmission offered by Fiat. There's,



perhaps, a bit more lean in the corners than with a Ducato, but, hey, this is a leisure vehicle not a hot hatch. And if your inner boy-racer hasn't been completely exorcised, then the 170bhp power unit fitted as standard on all Benimar Tessoros will put a grin on your face as wide as the 2.30m coachbuilt body.



WHO IS BENIMAR?

This Spanish brand developed a strong following in Britain in the late 1990s and early 2000s based on great value for money (particularly with its Europe and Europe Top models). It then disappeared from the scene here, before being reintroduced by Marquis in 2014. The Mileo range came first, followed by an expanded choice of layouts, then overcab versions and, finally, the Tessoro on Ford.



Benimar is, today, owned by Trigano, which acquired retailers, Marquis (and its sister company, Auto-Sleepers), at the start of 2017. Other Trigano brands include Auto-Trail, Chausson, Mobilvetta and Roller Team.



BUY A BENIMAR FROM...

The Benimar brand is exclusive to Marquis, with its 12 branches around England – from Golden Cross (Sussex), Poole and Plymouth in the south to Preston and County Durham in the north. The UK Benimar line-up has been developed hand-in-hand with Marquis and includes eight Mileo low-profiles, five Mileo overcab coachbuilds (all on Fiat) and six Ford Transit-based Tessoro low-profiles.



But if the dearth of Ford-based models is already making you think that a Transit won't make it to your shopping list, then the list of low-profile motorhomes with family-friendly bunk bed layouts might make you weep. Roller Team's Zefiro only mates bunks to a big overcab luton, so that leaves Chausson's 716 Flash (see August 2017 issue) or this more conventional model from Benimar. At over a metre shorter than its French nemesis, that could be your decision made if you have a lack of space on your driveway. At least you won't have to trawl dozens of dealers to compare models...

With the Tessoro 413 you get a typically

continental front lounge with L-settee, nearside bench and swivel cab chairs, all circling a fixed table. The L-shaped galley backing onto the lounge comes with a gas/electric hob, oven/grill, an extractor hood and a huge, 145-litre fridge/freezer with automatic energy selection. Between the tall cooler and the main galley there's also a slide-out floor-to-ceiling pantry unit. And, in a nod to UK preferences, there's even a microwave, but that's just the start of a specification tailored by Marquis to suit the British market. The latest 2018 models even have the habitation door on the UK nearside.

On the nearside, the 413's washroom has that

family essential, a separate shower, as well as the latest cassette loo, a basin with practical work surface alongside, and an opening window. Then, across the rear, are the bunk beds (claimed dimensions 2.10m by 0.80m each), with the possibility of folding away the lower bed to create a small garage.

Mum and dad's bed is an electric drop-down over the front lounge (said to be 1.90m by 1.39m). You'll need to deploy the ladder to access this and headroom is insufficient for sitting up, so this 'van is better suited to young, active families than grandparents looking for family versatility.