

Benimar Tessoro 483

Here's a UK-handed layout, great spec and huge storage, but the Ford cab is the biggest plus



NOW in its fourth season back in Britain, Benimar has risen rapidly to become one of the country's favourite imported brands. Its success was initially built on high spec and the marketing expertise of the nation's biggest motorhome retail group, Marquis. UK-handed layouts soon followed, first for the Mileo, then the Tessoro, while the Ford Transit base vehicle is yet another advantage in a predominantly Fiat/Peugeot-based sector. Until we see any coachbuilts based on the latest Volkswagen Crafter – or possibly the new Mercedes Sprinter later this year – the Tranny is most definitely the chassis of choice for motorhomes of this size.

Adding to the appeal of the Ford chassis, an automatic is available for £1,750 – and it's a smooth, torque convertor 'box rather than a robotised manual like the Fiat's. That just adds to the feeling that the rival Fiat is showing its age. You'll see the difference as soon as you sit in the cab, where the ergonomics are superior and you sit lower, too, with a reach and rake-adjustable steering wheel, twin armrests, tilting squab and variable lumbar support.

There's a smart new addition this season with Benimar fitting a touchscreen DAB radio with sat-nav and reversing screen built-in. The 2018 models also get automatic lights and wipers and a quick-defrosting windscreen.

Already included were a metallic silver cab, ESP, traction control, Hill Assist, alloy wheels, air-conditioning, cruise control and remote central locking.

Even the 170-horsepower engine is standard, giving the Tessoro really gutsy performance. Acceleration from rest is surprisingly vivid and steep climbs are dispatched effortlessly. That's less of a shock when you look at the all-important torque output figure for this downsized 2-litre Euro VI engine – its 405Nm maximum beats the top-of-the-range Fiat 180 Multijet unit!

Of course, motorhomes aren't just about driving but living, too, and having the

**BEST
NON-FIXED
BED OVER
£50K**



FACT FILE

BASE VEHICLE	Ford Transit
PRICE FROM	£53,995
BERTHS	4
TRAVEL SEATS	4
LENGTH	6.70m
WIDTH	2.30m
HEIGHT	2.89m
GROSS WEIGHT	3,500kg
PAYLOAD	495kg

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 coachbuilts (all on Fiat) and six Ford Transit-based Tessoro low-profiles.



habitation door on the UK side can be important to buyers who intend to do most of their touring on home soil. Few continental makers, however, have invested in mirroring their layouts in this way – the Tessoro joins the select band this year.

The 483 also introduces a new layout, making it three models now that have the over-lounge drop-down double as their main sleeping quarters. Of course, beds that appear almost out of nowhere (actually, from the ceiling) like this have transformed non-fixed bed layouts – allowing you the extra living space from not having a permanent bed, but without the hassle of rearranging tables and

cushions to make a (frequently lumpy) mattress each and every night.

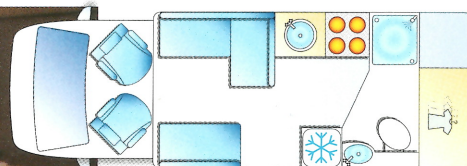
The Benimar's bed is superbly comfortable and glides down to whatever height you like at the twist of a key. If you want to maintain a lounge, or use the second bed below, then a ladder is available but, alternatively, the mattress can be powered all the way down to seat height. Pleasingly, the electric bed is shaped so as not to interrupt the use of the entrance door or the kitchen.

The 483 scores an even bigger victory over rivals as a four-berth, though. The omission of cupboards below the drop-down bed not only allows it to come down lower in two-berth

mode but frees up more headroom for family sleeping below when you're mob-handed. And the lower bed, for once, is a good one – very big and largely flat, while its make-up is not too complicated, either.

Possibly an even bigger drawback of non-fixed bed models in the past was the lack of externally accessed storage for all your bulky gear – whether that's sports gear, bikes or sun loungers. The Tessoro 483, however, is one of the few low-profiles without a fixed bed that *does* have a full-sized garage – and, even better, one with three loading doors (one each side and another in the back wall). The garage has 1.31m headroom (with the option to increase this in a





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 Tessoros 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 Adria, Auto-Trail, Chausson, Mobilvetta and Roller Team.



small zone on the offside) and there's almost 500kg of payload, too, despite the fact that, like all Tessoros, the 483 comes on a licence-friendly 3.5-tonne chassis.

Another key feature, of course, is the generous-sized lounge. With a long L-settee on the offside (incorporating belted travel seats for two), a two-person sofa on the nearside and twin swivel cab chairs, there's room for at least six to gather around the large table. The lack of top lockers enhances the feeling of space and the new cab reading lights are a great addition, especially as they incorporate hidden USB sockets. A height-adjustable TV bracket is important, too, so you're not forced to peer up

towards the roof to watch *Eastenders*.

A telly is one of the few things not fitted as standard on this 'van. What you do get, however, is powerful Truma Combi 6 gas/mains heating, an external barbecue point, a tracking system with a year's subscription and even a year's insurance (subject to terms and conditions). The bodywork is 99% wood-free with XPS insulation and water tank capacities are generous (120 litres fresh, 105 litres waste).

Then there's a kitchen with giant (149-litre) fridge/freezer and a microwave (such a rare find in an imported 'van and one of the obvious signs of Marquis' input). A combined oven/grill features, too, and the hob has a mains hotplate in

addition to the two gas rings.

But perhaps the most surprising aspect of this new Tessoro is the rear bathroom – and its humungous wardrobe behind two large mirror-fronted wardrobe doors. The hanging rail measures 1.61m long (!) and there's a vast shelved area for folded clothes, too.

There's plenty of room to get dressed and undressed in the washroom, while the shower is a separate cubicle that's hard to fault.

So, this Benimar is a great all-rounder with a huge bathroom, big garage and large lounge, plus a comprehensive spec and the driver appeal of the Ford base. And you can buy one from Marquis branches all around the UK. Nuff said.