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BENIMAR

Mileo 283

This smart, compact motorhome from the popular Spanish brand offers a huge range of kit as standard. Our team took it away for a long weekend and an in-depth look

WHERE WE STAYED
 Summers Pond Fishery & Campsite, Horsham RH13
 OPR Tel 01403 732 539
 Web summersponds.co.uk
 A tranquil lakeside park, open all year round, with a warm café and lots to do for the whole family

Price £51,995 Sleeps 3 Belts 4 Base Fiat Ducato Engine 2.3-litre, 150bhp, Euro 6 L/W/H 5.99/2.30/2.89m (19'7"/7'5"/9'5")
 MTPLM 3500kg Payload 650kg Water (fresh/waste) 120/105 litres Battery 85Ah Gas 2 x 6kg

In the past few years, compact motorhomes have really grown in popularity, and for good reason: they're easier to drive and park, command less of a premium on ferry crossings, and generally have an MTPLM equal to or less than the magic 3500kg figure - therefore can be driven with a category B driving licence.

No wonder, then, that Marquis Leisure - sole UK importer for popular Spanish brand Benimar - has chosen to retail the compact, new-for-2019 Mileo 283 via its extensive dealer network.

This sub-6m motorhome is also hugely UK-friendly - the accommodation door being on the 'correct' side is just one example - and it has a rear lounge.

It's a layout found in a couple of other 'vans built by British firms - not least Swift, which produces the Escape Compact C402 (winner of the Best Compact Motorhome gong in our last awards).

But how would the Mileo compare with British-built rivals? We took it away for a long weekend to find out.

DESIGN



The exterior of the 283 looks modern, with its grey and yellow graphics - it's quite

different to anything else you'll see currently on sale.

The low-profile overcab moulding looks sleek and aerodynamic, too.

The gas locker is located on the offside of the 'van, and it's set nicely low down so you won't have to lift the bottles too high when they

need replacing. The water-filler inlet is on the same side, which is handy for the driver, who'll be able to see it and therefore be able to position the 'van beside the tap more easily.

The accommodation door has a two-point locking system for security, and

the flush-fitting tinted window in the door blends in nicely with the rest of the body's colour scheme.

There was no roll-out awning fitted to this Mileo, but if you wanted to add a drive-away version, you wouldn't need to carry the toilet cassette through it when emptying the latter - the cassette locker door is on the offside.

Elsewhere on the exterior you'll find a gas barbecue point - perfect for al fresco dining - a shower point and rear-corner steadies.

When loading the 'van for travel, you'll be grateful for the two locker doors that give access to space inside.

The first lets you reach the area under the nearside rear sofa, while a large door on the back panel leads into the centre of the lounge, so you don't need to walk through the 'van when loading bedding and so on.

There's no electric step below the entrance door on this 'van, but you won't need one - the door is set low, so there's not too much of a climb needed to get into the motorhome.

ON THE ROAD



Under that white bonnet sits Fiat's 150bhp engine; a peppy unit that gives the Mileo 283 a nifty turn



Contact Marquis Leisure Address Winchester Rd, Lower Upham, Hants SO32 1HA Tel 0800 026 7777 Web www.marquisleisure.co.uk

WHAT MOTORHOME? Three-berth low-profile



SPACE INSIDE

The Mileo may be a small 'van, but it has plenty of storage. The space under the nearside rear sofa is accessible from outside, too



STEADY AND SOLID

There's not a huge overhang on this 'van, but rear-corner steadies do make things less bouncy when you're walking around inside



EAT OUTSIDE

Al fresco dining is easy thanks to the inclusion of an exterior gas barbecue point – simply connect your BBQ and start cooking



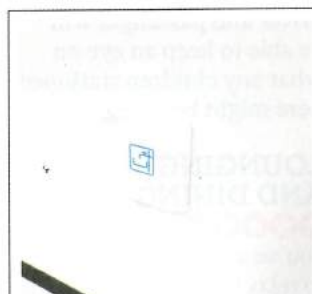
IT'S A GAS

The gas locker holds two 6kg bottles; it's located nice and low, too, so you don't have to lift them high when they need changing



COMFY DINETTE

Both cab seats swivel to join the dinette seat as a lounge. This circular table is big enough for snacks



OFFSIDE INLET

The water-filling point is on the offside – that's handy, because it will be easier for the driver to see when positioning near the tap



SUPERB CAB SPEC

Latest Ducato cab is car-like, and there are many great features in here as standard – they include sat-nav and cruise control



STUNNING SKYLIGHT

We love overcab skylights, and this is a good example – it's large and simply floods the front lounge area with natural illumination



SPACE FOR STUFF

Cubbyholes above both sides of the cab are ideal for storing light items when on the move. They have a lip, so nothing should fall out

| ★ LIVE-IN TEST |



SUPER SURFACE

This kitchen is well designed to make the most of the space available. The handy lift-up flap helps to extend the work surface, too



ROOM FOR TINS

The microwave's location, below the sink, is excellent as it's easy to safely retrieve hot food. There's plenty of storage space here as well



KEEP YOUR COOL

The fridge isn't huge, but it should be large enough to store sufficient food for a few days. There's a freezer compartment up top



DINE WITH EASE

The rear lounge is a great size for dining in comfort – four can easily be accommodated at the large table, too



YOU'LL SLEEP WELL

The rear lounge makes up into a double bed – you can choose to leave it up during the day and eat in the front of the 'van if that suits



SINGLE SLEEPING

There's another bed that can be made up at the front of the 'van. It's comfortable but narrow, so perhaps best for children or guests



ABLUTION STATION

The washroom is smart in looks and cleverly designed – it's compact, but a door slides around to create a separate shower cubicle

of speed when pulling away from junctions. There's plenty of torque available – 280lb ft of it in fact – and it will be at its maximum nicely down the rev range, at just 1500rpm.

Our test vehicle was fitted with the standard six-speed manual gearbox; Fiat's Comfort-Matic automated 'box is a £2100 cost option.

The view is excellent from both driver and passenger cab seat; we didn't find the A-pillars obtrusive in any way. The 'van has a small turning circle; combined with its diminutive size, this means it's agile on the road.

Marquis's Benimars also come with a high cab spec as standard – it's great to see both driver and passenger airbags here. Safety kit also includes ABS, ESP, traction control, Hill Assist and more; while other welcome features are cruise control, electric windows and mirrors, and automatic headlights and windscreen wipers.

What's more, there's a DAB radio unit complete with sat-nav and rear-view camera system – you can see out of the back window, but the latter is a welcome addition to help you view hazards closer to the ground.

This may be a three-berth motorhome, but you can travel with four people – ideal if you want to bring guests who are willing to sleep in an awning or tent.

The rear belted seats are a little upright, but still comfortable – and both driver and passenger will be able to keep an eye on what any children stationed here might be doing.

LOUNGING AND DINING



You've a choice of two places to relax in this 'van: you can swivel the cab seats and sit at the front, or occupy the facing sofas at the rear.

If you choose the front option, you can make use of the small round table that sits on a single leg mounted into



the floor. It's not huge, though, so is probably best suited for snacks and drinks. It's a comfortable place to lounge, with the cab seats being the best choice: the belted seats are (necessarily) rather upright.

Either way, you get the benefit of a couple of reading lights on stalks in the cab, and that large skylight above, which simply floods the front of the interior with brightness during the day.

For more complex meals, you're likely to want to eat in the rear lounge. Again, it's a comfortable place to spend time; despite this being a compact 'van, there's space here for a couple to stretch out and relax.

The dining table slots onto a rail on the rear wall, so it can't be moved fore and aft, but it's a good size and feels sturdy when in place.

There's plenty of lighting in the back here to help you see what you're eating, and space to mount a flatscreen television on the rear of the wardrobe wall if you wish.

The fabrics used on the upholstery feel good quality and look smart. The dark-brown shades of the rear lounge should prove practical in case of any accidental spills, too. The curtains, in a matching fabric, also look smart, and we appreciated the inclusion of net curtains on the windows - they allow an element of privacy even when the blinds are up.

Natural illumination in this area is good, with three large windows - one on each wall.

The boiler for the Truma 6kW space- and water-heating system lives under the offside sofa at the rear; blown-air ducts at the base of the seating keep all occupants warm in cold weather.

KITCHEN



As with the rest of this 'van, the spec level in the kitchen is high. There's a three-ring gas hob with a glass lid (the latter is useful for providing additional work surface), and

an oven/grill low down by the Thetford 80-litre fridge, meaning you won't need to lift out hot dishes from above your head. The same goes for the microwave, which is again located below the work surface.

It's also good to find an extractor fan above the hob, which will help whisk away any cooking smells from the accommodation area.

The large stainless steel sink also has a glass lid, which helps to increase the amount of work surface available. The same is true of the lift-up extension at the end of the kitchen unit, which feels sturdy and secure when raised.

Two mains sockets are located in the kitchen.

WASHROOM



Compact the Mileo 283 may be, but the washroom, on the offside centre of the 'van, is of decent dimensions.

There's a reasonable step up to enter the area; once you're in, a swivel-bowl cassette toilet with electric flush sits to the right. There's a smart black basin to the left, and the chrome tap pulls out to become the shower head - it can be slotted onto a riser.

What's particularly cleverly designed here is the shower cubicle: a solid plastic unit can be swivelled around from behind to protect the toilet and rear walls from getting wet while you're showering.

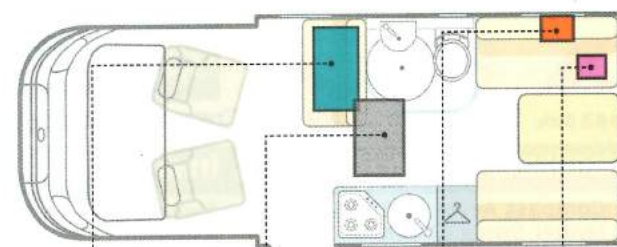
A long towel rail sits below the basin; it's close to one of the two heater air vents in here, so your towels should dry quickly and stay warm.

Other neat touches you'll find in here include a cup/toothbrush holder, and a liquid-soap dispenser.

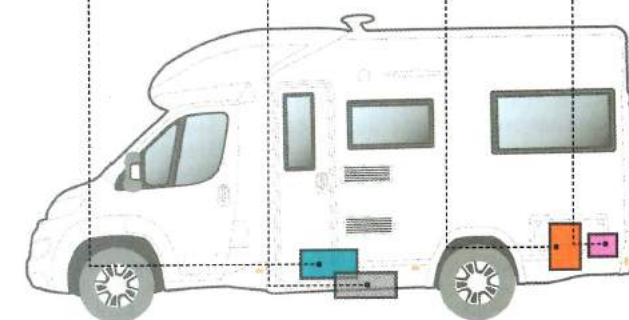
The artificial illumination is excellent, supplemented by a mini-Heki rooflight above the shower and a window above the toilet.

There's not much storage here, so you won't want too many toiletries - it's limited to a slim cupboard above the window, and a small ☺

LAYOUT

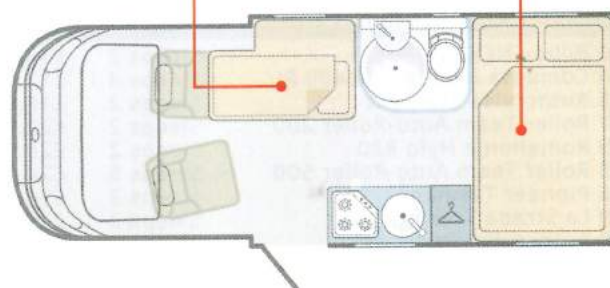


FRESH WATER	WASTE WATER	GAS	BATTERY
120 litres	105 litres	2 x 6kg	85h



Front single bed
 1.50 x 0.60m
 (4'9" x 2'0")

Rear double bed
 2.10 x 1.25m
 (6'9" x 4'1")



THE BENIMAR STORY

Spanish manufacturer Benimar produced its first motorhome back in 1978; the brand began life as Caravanas Benimar in 1974. The Benimar name derives from a merging of the company's initial location - Benicarló - and *mar*, meaning 'sea' in Spanish. The latter is said to be a tribute to 'the company's Mediterranean spirit'. Today Benimar's models are built in Peñíscola, Spain, and Marquis Leisure is the sole UK distributor of the brand. Benimar is also part of the mighty Trigano Group.



cubbyhole. Two smart hooks on the wall – in the shape of the Benimar ‘B’ – are a handy addition, however.

SLEEPING



The main sleeping area in this motorhome is at the rear, and is made up from the twin facing sofas – it’s a really straightforward process, simply requiring the base units to be pulled across to join in the middle, and the sofa cushions to be rearranged to create the flat sleeping surface.

Some of our testers found the bed a little hard, so users might prefer to place a mattress topper over the cushions to provide a bit more comfort.

The resulting double bed isn’t hugely wide, but it is long – six-footers shouldn’t be uncomfortable here.

The front dinette can also be made up into a single bed, using the belted-seat bench and the driver’s seat.

A single mattress topper is provided to create a flat sleeping surface here, and the resulting single bed is perfectly comfortable.

We reckon that most buyers will use this as an occasional bed for guests or children, however.

The beauty of this layout is that, if you’re a couple planning to be out for most of the day, you can leave the double bed made up during the whole of your tour and use the front dinette for eating breakfast and snacks.

STORAGE



A ‘van of these compact dimensions is never going to provide the ultimate in storage space, but there is a fair amount of capacity in the Mileo 283.

The prime storage area is in the base box of the nearside rear sofa (the one on the offside is taken up by the boiler and electric systems); this can also be accessed from outside.

There’s also a really good-sized wardrobe in the ‘van, located on the nearside between the kitchen and the rear sofa.

It’s half-height and has a hanging rail; there’s loads of room in here to store the clothes of a couple, as well as shoes and boots.

There’s also plenty of room for clothes and other lighter items in the seven lockers you’ll find up above the rear lounge – they’re smartly finished in cream and usefully, also have easy-to-grab handles.

There are further lockers above the front dinette, and a couple of cubbyholes and a shelf up above the cab.

Storage in the kitchen is excellent, with numerous lockers and a sliding drawer that’s ideal for packaged goods and tins.

A small cubbyhole within the floor by the front dinette is ideal for hiding valuables when you’re pitched up.

EQUIPMENT



Its equipment level really is the Mileo 283’s strongest suit, and the higher spec sets it apart from Benimar’s Primero 283 (£45,995), from the range below the Mileo.

In addition to the kit previously mentioned, on the Mileo you’ll find a solar panel to supplement the 85Ah leisure battery, Truma’s iNet system to allow you to remotely control the heating, a 120-litre heated fresh-water tank (ideal for long tours in cold weather), a 105-litre waste-water tank (also heated), mounting points for a bike rack, an extractor-fan rooflight above the kitchen, an easy-to-use control panel near the accommodation door, an LED awning light, a Trackstar Leisure CAT6 Tracker with one year’s free subscription, a flyscreen on the accommodation door, a CO alarm and smoke alarm, and a bracket for a flatscreen television. ➔

OUR TEST TEAM’S NOTES



CLAUDIA DOWELL
 “Driving this motorhome is a doddle – it’s so compact and has a good turning circle. Adding the rear-corner steadies is also a good idea, helping to make the rear lounge feel less bouncy when you’re pitched up.”



SARAH WAKELY
 “I spent a lot of time in this motorhome when travelling to Belgium in it last year, and I loved it. The layout is ideal for a couple – you can choose to leave the rear lounge made up as a bed during the day, so there’s no setting-up to do after a busy day exploring.”



PETER BABER
 “A 150bhp engine in a ‘van of these dimensions is a real treat – it means quick getaways at junctions, even with lots of kit on board. Given the 650kg payload, you should be able to take plenty of kit with you – and there are plenty of places to store it.”

+ LIKES



BACK DOOR

This rear hatch is such a clever idea – it allows you to load kit without needing to walk through the ‘van



KITCHEN DESIGN

The kitchen is really well specified, with its UK-friendly oven/grill, yet retains plenty of storage space

- DISLIKES



REAR-BED COMFORT

Some of our testers found the rear bed a little firm – you might want to add a mattress topper for additional comfort

PRACTICAL MOTORHOME VERDICT



Some buyers are put off by make-up beds, but by having two lounge areas, the Mileo 283 gives you the best of both worlds - it's easy to leave the bed up during the day, and use the front dinette for relaxing in the evening.

What's more, you've still got the choice of accommodating a third guest, too, which provides even greater flexibility.

But it's the high specification and quality of fixtures and fittings that really impressed us most about this Benimar. It's not as cheap as some of its UK rivals, but the level of standard kit that you get for your money is just astonishing. And when you take that

into account, this smart, compact motorhome instantly becomes even more appealing.

DESIGN	★★★★★
ON THE ROAD	★★★★★
LOUNGING & DINING	★★★★★
KITCHEN	★★★★★
WASHROOM	★★★★★
SLEEPING	★★★★★
STORAGE	★★★★★
EQUIPMENT	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

TECHNICAL DATA



BASE VEHICLE

Chassis Fiat Ducato
Engine 2.3-litre, 150bhp Euro 6 Multijet
Power 150bhp @ 3600rpm
Torque 380Nm @ 1500rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual

Features include DAB radio with MP3/CD, steering-wheel media controls, driver/passenger airbags, ABS, ESP, traction control, Hill Assist, cruise control, alloy wheels plus full spare, heated mirrors, auto headlights and windscreen wipers, air-con, sat-nav, rear-view camera. Two-year Fiat chassis warranty as standard



CONVERSION

GRP and 99% wood-free construction, 25mm XPS insulation on side walls, 53mm XPS insulation on floor and roof, high-impact scratch-resistant flooring, twin-locking habitation door on UK nearside, LED awning light, rear-corner steadies. Two-year habitation guarantee, five-year water-ingress guarantee



LOUNGING AND DINING

Parallel rear sofas and front dinette, two tables, Bergen fabric upholstery, TV bracket, skyview rooflight



KITCHEN

Three-burner gas hob, oven/grill, stainless steel sink, 80-litre Thetford fridge with freezer compartment, microwave oven, extractor fan



SLEEPING

Rear double 2.10 x 1.25m (6'9" x 4'1")
Front single 1.50 x 0.60m (4'9" x 2'0")



EQUIPMENT

Thetford cassette toilet with electric flush, separate shower, 3 x 220V sockets, 3 x 12V sockets, TV aerial, LED lighting, Truma Combi 6kW heating system, Truma iNet control panel, solar panel, fan rooflight, Grade III winter pack including insulated/heated waste tanks and more, Trackstar Leisure Tracker with one-year subscription, external BBQ and shower point, 120-litre fresh-water tank, 105-litre waste-water tank, 85Ah leisure battery



OPTIONS

MTPLM upgrade to 3650kg/4400kg (FOC/£2000), Copenhagen upholstery (£795), tow bar (£1350), Fiat Comfort-Matic automated gearbox (£2100)

OR YOU COULD TRY...



SWIFT ESCAPE COMPACT C402

From £47,350

The Swift Escape Compact range was new for 2019, and this model won our latest Best Compact Motorhome award. It's slightly narrower than the Mileo 283, but is also based on the Fiat Ducato.



ELDDIS ACCORDO 135

£42,999

Elldis's version of the front half-dinette, rear-lounge layout is a fair bit cheaper than the Benimar Mileo 283. It's based on the Peugeot Boxer, but has a less powerful engine than the Spanish 'van, and a lower spec level.