

# Benimar Primero 301

Compact in size and with an equally downsized price tag, this Spaniard has two double beds and



**I**n the past five years Benimar has risen from zero to hero of the Marquis fleet, a reintroduced brand that is now one of Britain's best-selling imported makes. It has done so on the back of keen pricing and equipment levels designed to tackle British-built rivals head on. Not only that, but its layouts are fully adapted to the UK, with habitation doors on our nearside.

But while Trigano has done more to offset the impact of worsening euro exchange rates than some other groups, its prices have still had to rise and the popular Mileo range now starts at £50,995. If your budget won't quite stretch that far, and you need a price tag with

a four at the front, it has an answer, though – the new Primero. Think of this as Mileo-lite – some of the layouts are hand-me-downs from its established sister range, the styling is familiar, but spec (while still covering all the essentials) is less lavish. Crucially, though, a £44,995 windscreen sticker here (six grand less than last year's Mileo with the same floorplan) means just that – there are no essential packs and no must-have options. You only need to pay more (£2,100 more, to be precise) if you want an automated Comfort-Matic gearbox.

While the cost of this Primero 301 might seem a bit out of date, so might its overcab

body style. Such shapes have been increasingly replaced in most model ranges by low-profiles, but the overcab is not dead. Kids love that luton 'den' and it's a great dumping ground for lightweight stuff such as bedding, as well as being an instant bedroom. When motorhomes are, increasingly, being used by wider family groups, it's not surprising that the type endures.

It may not be the prettiest of motorhomes but the lower, wider rear axle Camper version of the Ducato chassis-cab keeps the floor level low and obviates the need for an external step. And the 130bhp engine offers adequate performance – this is, after all, a motorhome



**BEST COACHBUILT WITH FIXED BED (UNDER £50K)**


spec tailored to UK tastes



FACT FILE	
<b>BASE VEHICLE</b>	Fiat Ducato
<b>PRICE FROM</b>	£44,995
<b>BERTHS</b>	4
<b>TRAVEL SEATS</b>	4
<b>LENGTH</b>	5.99m
<b>WIDTH</b>	2.30m
<b>HEIGHT</b>	3.05m
<b>GROSS WEIGHT</b>	3,500kg
<b>PAYLOAD</b>	850kg

**BUY A BENIMAR FROM...**

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 in the north.



In Scotland Benimar motorhomes are sold through The Motorhome Company in Perthshire and in Northern Ireland Camper Ni has been appointed as sole distributor.

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

that's just 5.99m long, with a mass in running order (weight before you add chattels and passengers) of just 2,650kg. You miss out on some of the Mileo's luxuries (such as sat-nav and alloy wheels), but everything you really need is here, including cab air-conditioning, cruise control, a passenger airbag, radio/CD with Bluetooth and ESP, Traction Plus and Hill Descent Control.

Thanks to the overcab, this Benimar is able to offer four adult berths in two instant double beds – in a body length less than many van conversions. This is its biggest USP.

And, when you sample the overcab bed, you'll appreciate the reason for the Primero's Cyrano

de Bergerac proboscis. If you are going to use an overcab as an adult bedroom it needs to be a big one like this. There's no real loss of headroom at the front of the luton and the bed is a huge 1.99m by 1.54m. There's an opening window on the offside, a roof vent, and two individually switched spotlamps on the nearside, as well as a double USB port.

The Primero's other bed also runs across the width of the vehicle and it's another biggie – even longer than the overcab one, with much greater headroom and room to comfortably sit up in bed.

Of course, the other big plus of this layout is the storage offered beneath the rear bed. The

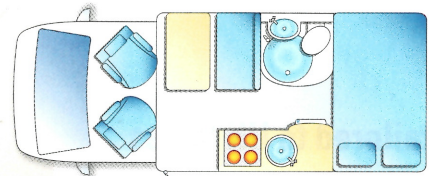
garage has two loading doors and internal height just exceeds a metre. There are 12V and 230V sockets, as well as heating and lighting and servicing access for the boiler. And if travelling light is an anathema to you then the payload of 850kg (or a full tonne if you upgrade the chassis to 3,650kg – at no extra cost) is impressive. It's another benefit of paring back the spec.

The Primero may not be as well appointed as a Mileo, but it still has upmarket framed windows, Grade III insulation and NCC approval, as well as 99% wood-free construction.

And, while the galley here omits a microwave from the kit list, it does have an oven/grill, a hob







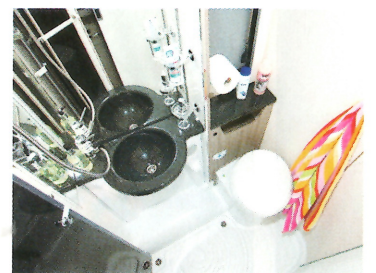
**WHO IS BENIMAR?**

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 coachbuilts. 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. New for 2019 are a more entry-level Primero range of coachbuilts on Fiat and a pair of Benivan van conversions, the latter actually built in the UK by Auto-Trail.

Benimar is owned by the French Trigan 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.



with mains-powered hotplate (as well as two gas rings) and a more-than-acceptable slab of worktop space (where you can also deploy the removable draining board). You won't be disappointed in this kitchen if you're coming from a British-built motorhome.

In terms of galley storage there's a deep pan drawer under the oven plus a cutlery drawer and three overhead lockers.

Opposite, the washroom has curved, rotating screens (rather than a horribly clammy curtain) to create a shower compartment and water flows away via twin drains. Accessories such as a toothbrush mug, toilet roll holder and large mirror are provided,

as well as more obvious essentials such as the opening window, swivel cassette toilet and fixed circular basin with matching grey worktop alongside.

White walls, light-coloured fabrics and furniture and plenty of artificial illumination mean that the Primero doesn't feel claustrophobic, despite its compact size and the lack of any XL-sized rooflights. On site, the front seats swivel easily to face a half-dinette bench and wall-mounted table with rotating extension leaf. There's room for four to dine here.

We could fuss about minutiae such as the omission of a TV bracket but the truth is that there's not much that you'll miss here. For a

budget model, the Primero seems well appointed. Heating, for example, is by a 4kW Truma Combi with gas/mains operation and the habitation door has a window and bin. You'll also find five 230V sockets, four 12V points and double USBs in each bedroom area.

The two big double beds, both instantly available with bedding in situ, are the key to the appeal of this new Benimar. Added to which are a keen price, compact size and that rear garage which, for once, is mated to a generous payload. The spec isn't regal but it's far from being monastic and the money you've saved will pay for plenty of diesel and ferry crossings for far-flung adventures.