

Benimar Tessoro 413

A sub-6.5m motorhome for families, the Tessoro 413 is an unusual bunk bed model that packs a lot



THE Tessoro 483 made it onto our top 'vans list of 2018, with our report saying, "this 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." This time it's the 413 that takes the plaudits.

This model is specifically designed for touring with the little ones. No longer does a family 'van have to have an ungainly overcab; this is one of a very select few low-profile coachbuilts with a drop-down bed for mum and dad, plus bunks for the sprogs. That it offers such a parent-pleasing floorplan in an overall length of just 6.41m makes it even more worthy of your attention.

Whether it's Ma or Pa at the wheel, they'll be glad

that Benimar chose the Ford Transit to underpin the Tessoro. From the moment you settle behind the reach-and-rake-adjustable steering wheel (with a nice small diameter and leather-wrapped), it feels more car-like and contemporary than the Fiat/Peugeot-based opposition. You sit lower for a start, behind a fascia that could have been removed from a Fiesta, then photocopied at 125%.

As befits a product specified for the UK by importer, Marquis, this isn't just a Bob the Builder-spec Tranny, either. On the outside, there's metallic silver paint, plus alloy wheels and I'm-faster-than-you '170 Horsepower' logos on each front wing. Then, on the inside, there are height-adjustable seats with twin armrests and an Xzent DAB radio

with touchscreen, Bluetooth, CD and MP3, sat-nav and the display for the reversing camera. And you don't have to add any options packs to get cab air-conditioning, a passenger airbag, cruise control, ESP and hill assist – they're all included in the £51,995 price tag. More surprisingly, so are automatic lights and wipers, while cornering lights are another standard feature – and a real boon in night driving.

You'll have to talk to your Marquis branch if you want to add a satellite dish, awning or bike rack (mountings for the last are already in situ), but there's already a roof-mounted solar panel, as well as external shower and barbecue points. A Trackstar Leisure Category 6 tracking system is fitted, too,

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in



FACT FILE

BASE VEHICLE	Ford Transit
PRICE FROM	£51,995
BERTHS	4
TRAVEL SEATS	4
LENGTH	6.41m
WIDTH	2.30m
HEIGHT	2.89m
GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT	3,500kg
PAYLOAD	415kg

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.



which is especially important as some insurers have reported Fords being targeted by thieves recently.

The body construction is 99% wood-free, with Grade III insulation and a Winter Pack including a heated waste tank and external thermal windscreen cover. The fresh tank (a generous 120 litres) is inboard for the ultimate in winter-proofing and the gas/electric Combi boiler is the more potent 6kW version. But the most important feature for some might be the habitation door on the UK nearside (a rare find on an imported model).

You'll be pleased to see upmarket framed windows for the habitation area and that the door requires no external step.

There are also doors on either side at the rear for

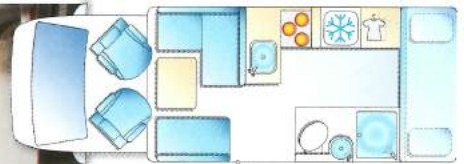
access into the bunk/garage area. As with many other bunk bed models, it's possible to turn the lower bed space into a garage. Hinged bed bases simply fold through 90 degrees after removing the two-part mattress (which can then be stacked vertically inside) to create a space that's up to 1.09m high and 680mm/820mm wide (broader on the offside, where the loading door is also larger).

Unsurprisingly, the Tessoro's lounge adopts a half-dinette, so as to incorporate the necessary rear travel seats (here with separate, height-adjustable headrests). Meanwhile, on site, with both cab seats swivelled and a wide inward-facing settee on the nearside, there's more than enough room to get five sat around the table (which folds in half when it's

just for coffees). Enhancing comfort on site, there's a selection of scatter cushions and, temptingly, the passenger cab seat can rotate right round so that you can put your feet up on the adjacent sofa.

The overcab sunroof makes the front of the 413 appear very light, perhaps crucially, as this is quite a small lounge area, and there's plenty of artificial illumination, too. Flexible wand reading lights are fitted above the cab chairs and these include USB ports in their bases. Another neat trick is the side seat's armrest, which provides a useful resting place for drinks, as well as hiding a four-bottle rack and shoe cupboard below.

The galley continues the theme of 'how did they squeeze all this into less than 6.5m?'. The spec list is



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.



impressive – two gas rings, mains hotplate, grill/oven, extractor hood, microwave and a giant fridge/freezer with 149-litre capacity and automatic energy selection. Storage might not seem so great, at first, but then you discover the full-height slide-out pantry unit next to the fridge and the trio of drawers (one sufficiently large for pots and pans) under the sink.

Of course, the most fundamental part of this motorhome's layout is its rear bunk beds and these are truly adult-sized (though slightly narrower towards the nearside). Each has its own privacy curtain, light and opening window (a roof vent as well, up top). The lower bed has a little more headroom, the upper one a slatted bed base for

extra comfort – let the kids fight it out?

The parental quarters (rated at 230kg maximum) come gliding down from the lounge ceiling at the press of a button. Importantly, the lowered bed does not prevent access through the habitation door, although a sticker suggests you shouldn't use the hob with the bed down.

As important for family motorhoming as the bunks, will be the separate shower. It's a good size, with twin drains, a wooden duckboard and tinted bifold door. And, although you step up into the washroom, the shower still has headroom of 1.89m.

There's plenty of room around the basin and swivel toilet, too, plus pretty generous high and low-level storage. Worktop alongside the washbasin

is useful for the products that you're using and there's a hook and a rail for towels. With an opening window, rooflight, choice of mirrors and toothbrush mug, it's hard hard to fault this little room – even the loo is at a comfortable height, for once.

A relatively compact coachbuilt, the Tessoro 413 still manages to pack in everything that a 2+2 family will need, despite its size. The washroom (with large separate shower), kitchen (with microwave and big fridge/freezer) and sleeping accommodation (with adult-sized bunks) are all excellent and the spec is comprehensive throughout. Add in the 170bhp Ford chassis as the icing on the cake and this Benimar makes a great package at a competitive price.