



# Perfect match

Can Spanish manufacturer Benimar continue its success in Britain with its latest Ford model? We sent **Nick Harding** to find out



**B**enimar and Britain seems a rather good match. The Spanish manufacturer's motorhomes were re-introduced here three seasons ago across the 11-strong Marquis dealer network in England and are represented in Scotland and Ireland by independent retailers. So, unlike many imported marques, there is a handy network of agents through which to purchase one.

The Tessoro range – comprising low-profile coachbuilts based on a Ford Transit with drop-down beds and a maximum weight of 3,500kg – now numbers six models, with this four-berth 483 the sole addition for the season ahead.

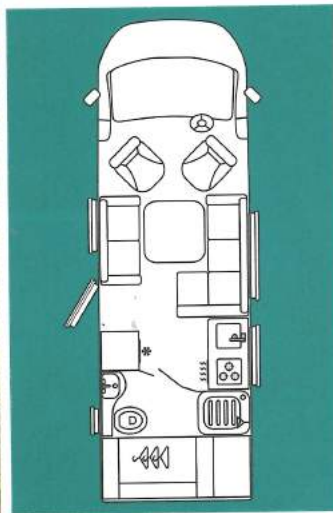
## BUILD QUALITY

Immediate positives are the fact that the habitation door is on the nearside – where we want it in the UK – and the fact that the Tessoro range has approval from the National Caravan Council.

Benimar prices – Tessoros range from £50,995 to £55,995 – may put them in the 'budget coachbuilt' category but there's certainly not much to indicate cost-cutting in terms of bodywork construction. This 483 is 99% wood-free, with a tough GRP outer. Flush-fitting windows, too, are the kind of feature you wouldn't expect in a lower-cost motorhome.

The garage storage zone at the back has three-door access and – unusually – a large door at the back. The external shower and gas points are offered as standard.

The Ford base vehicle has a three-year warranty, the habitation area is covered for two, while the bodywork is protected for five years against water ingress. There's even



Left: habitation door is usefully on our nearside  
Below: garage access is good



## TECHNICAL RATINGS

<b>74%</b> BUILD QUALITY	<b>88%</b> DRIVING	<b>69%</b> DAYTIME	<b>65%</b> NIGHT-TIME
<b>60%</b> KITCHEN	<b>89%</b> WASHROOM	<b>78%</b> LIGHTING	<b>75%</b> VERDICT
<b>£</b> Price/as tested £53,995 OTR	<b>Engine</b> 2-litre turbo-diesel Euro VI	<b>MRO</b> 3,005kg (59.15cwt)	<b>Overall length</b> 21ft 9in (6.63m)
<b>Caravan and Motorhome Club Insurance</b> Please see quote provided in the 'Did you know?' roundel on this page*	<b>Power</b> 168bhp (125kW) @ 3,500rpm	<b>MTPLM</b> 3,500kg (68.89cwt)	<b>Overall width</b> 7ft 6in (2.29m)
	<b>Torque</b> 299lb ft (405Nm) @ 1,500-2,500rpm	<b>User payload</b> 495kg (9.74cwt)	<b>Overall height</b> 9ft 5in (2.87m)
	<b>Transmission</b> 6-speed manual, FWD	<b>Fuel/tank/econ</b> Diesel/14.3 gals (65 litres)/28-34mpg	<b>Max internal height</b> 6ft 9in (2.06m)

Figures from manufacturer's literature. \*Premium Saving Guarantee. Subject to proof of existing renewal, including cover and price (eg a copy of your renewal notice), when cover is on a like-for-like basis. Please note, terms and conditions, eg excess(es), may vary from your current insurer. Courtesy car is subject to availability. Subject to terms and conditions and the Insurer's acceptance of the Risk. The Club's Motorhome Insurance is arranged for the Club by Devitt Insurance Services Limited, Insurance Brokers. Caravan and Motorhome Club is a trading name of The Caravan Club Limited. The Caravan Club Limited and Devitt Insurance Services Limited are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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### DRIVING

Comparisons between market-leader Fiat Ducato and this latest Ford Transit are inevitable. I'll start by saying the 170bhp engine that's standard in all Tessoros now is an absolute peach, although you'll need to stir the gearbox to make the most of it all. There's also an automatic transmission option costing £1,750.

The Ford has a modern-looking cab with impressive equipment levels. Automatic headlights and windscreen wipers are standard, as is Ford's quick defrost function for the front window, while features like the padded steering wheel with controls for the stereo (digital radio with CD, plus MP3 and Bluetooth connectivity) all help make it feel car-like.

Captain's-style seats come complete with twin adjustable armrests and lumbar support, plus height adjustment.

### DAYTIME

A roomy lounge, certainly by continental motorhome standards, is somewhat dominated by the large, almost-square pedestal leg table in the seating area. It's reasonably sturdy and the height can be controlled electronically – a nice touch.

Typically for a European vehicle, the side windows aren't the largest, but the opening sunroof over the cab is ideal for letting daylight in. A concertina blind can deflect the heat if it's too sunny but the side windows only get cassette roller blinds. All windows, and the habitation door, have flyscreens.

Benimar watchers will note there's a lighter finish to the furniture compared to the Mileo

sister range and the upholstery in the test vehicle is the only available option. One problem with drop-down bed arrangements is a reduction in overhead lockers. There is, however, some seat-base space, open shelving in the overcab area and that garage at the back. It's hard to see folk struggling to find places to put things, and fittings like the height-adjustable television bracket are on the standard itinerary, along with iNet connectivity for Truma's heating and hot water system, a solar panel, and much more.

### NIGHT-TIME

Drop-down beds are all the rage at the moment – seemingly solving the conundrum of optimising daytime space while offering the undoubted comfort of a 'permanent' double at night.