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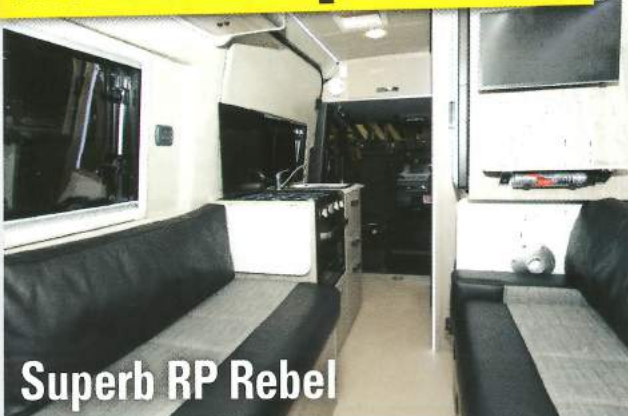


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Benimar

Mileo 286

This sub-7m model has a large front lounge, a drop-down double bed and a rear garage



FACT FILE

BASE VEHICLE	Fiat Ducato
PRICE FROM	£54,995
BERTHS	4
TRAVEL SEATS	4
LENGTH	6.95m
WIDTH	2.30m
HEIGHT	2.89m
GROSS WEIGHT	3,500kg (3,650kg or 4,400kg options)
PAYLOAD	370kg (520kg dr, 1,230kg options)



THE first Benimar Mileo motorhomes arrived at Marquis branches in 2014, since when the brand has gone from strength to strength, adding more layouts and additional ranges. The Mileo 286 arrived in 2016 and, for 2019, there are just detail improvements. Fabrics have been updated (choose from Bergen or Copenhagen), the bathroom has new accessories and there are better locks for the garage, while the habitation door is new, too. But the layout remains unchanged.

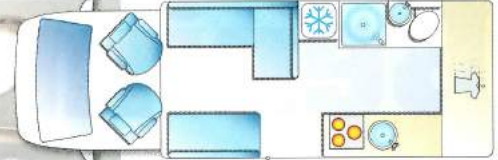
As does the base vehicle. That it's a Fiat Ducato is expected but you might not anticipate such a high-spec version of the ubiquitous Italian. Here,

it's the 150bhp engine as standard (with Comfort-Matic gearbox for an additional £2,100), while a DAB radio with sat-nav and rear view camera, ESP, Traction Plus, Hill Assist, cab air-conditioning and cruise control are all present and correct, too. It's a 3,500kg chassis – to please younger and older drivers alike – but those seeking more payload (than 370kg) can opt for a 3,650kg gross weight at no extra cost or a 4,400kg maximum (and massive carrying capacity) for an extra two grand.

But it's not just that Marquis has used its influence to add extra gear to a continental import. The Mileo is actually designed to suit

the UK market, with its habitation door on our nearside, NCC approval, Grade III insulation and more.

The floorplan has a more continental feel to it, though. Here's a low-profile where the main bed is the electric drop-down transverse double over the lounge (1.90m by 1.40m says Benimar). Not having a fixed bed frees up extra room for the lounge, kitchen and bathroom, but what



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 and Ireland Benimar motorhomes are sold through Marquis' partners – The Motorhome Company in Perthshire and Anchor Point Motorhomes in Co Tipperary.

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.

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 coachbuilds. 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 coachbuilds, while Tessoro low-profiles added Ford-based models to the line-up. New for 2019 are a more entry-level Primero range of coachbuilds 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 Trigrano 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.



about storage? Normally, without a permanent bed you lose the big space underneath for bulky outdoor or sports gear. Here, though, there's a proper garage across the rear. It's not a unique idea; in fact, fellow Trigrano Group brand, Chausson, came up with the concept, but the Benimar isn't a straight copy of its rivals, not least because the bathroom is mounted along the offside, rather than across the rear.

That means that the wardrobe space above the garage is split – part of it (the smaller part – his wardrobe?) is accessed from the washroom, while the bigger space (with shelves – hers?) sits

adjacent to the kitchen. There's even a pull-down pair of steps here to make reaching your ballgown easier. And behind those steps, a door allows you to reach your gear (or pets?) in the garage without stepping outside.

At the rearmost end of the galley, you'll also find a pull-out pantry for all your tinned foods, etc. It's just one of the impressive features of this kitchen, including a dual-fuel hob, oven and grill, microwave (mounted, for once, below counter height rather than high up) and plenty of worktop. There's an extractor hood, too, while opposite is a tall 135-litre fridge/freezer.

Six could sit in the lounge without a squash – there's an L-settee on the offside, shorter straight sofa opposite, plus (of course) the swivel cab chairs (where the floor is slightly higher). Unusually, the table is of the free-standing variety – for travel it stows away in the garage.

You don't need the tabletop for bed-making but the extra boards that form the base of the lounge bed (2.10m by 1.30m) are, again, found in the garage. That is, surely, only an occasional-use bed, though, for the electric drop-down whirs down from the ceiling to just above seat level if no one is kipping below.