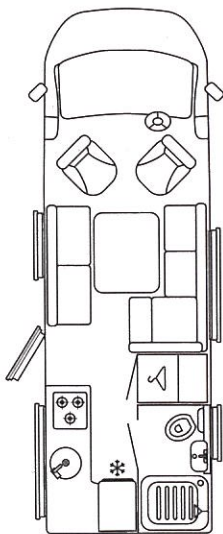




SHORT STORY

Nick Harding checks out a compact coachbuilt that offers a high spec and a surprising amount of living space



Don't let the sub-6m overall length of this compact coachbuilt put you off – it's jam-packed with kit and there's plenty of living space for couples who want to tour with a bit of swagger. It can even cope with four, if required.

Benimars are built in Spain and imported by the Marquis Leisure dealer group. The Tessoro has emerged as a real favourite on these shores – it is fully configured for the UK market, with the habitation door on the nearside and the interiors switched to suit.

Prices for the Tessoro 481 start at £74,495, but the addition of automatic transmission adds £2,500 while swiping some 50kg from the payload – but don't worry, you still have a healthy 511kg to play with. The maximum weight is 3,500kg.

A towbar and electrics, at £1,400, are the only other factory-fitted options on offer, but that doesn't mean you won't want to top up with

dealer-fitted accessories such as a TV, lithium leisure battery or on-board Wi-Fi.

Let's take a closer look...

BUILD QUALITY

It may look a bit 'stubby', but the minimal rear overhang bodes well for driving. The coachbuilt bodywork is 99% wood-free and boasts tough GRP outer walls, with fittings to add a bike rack on the rear panel. It is claimed that XPS insulation is slightly less permeable to water than standard polystyrene.

The windows are flush-fitting, with a Skyview sunroof in the overcab section and a window in the habitation door. All this should help to let in light during the day – often a challenge for any shorter motorhome with a drop-down bed.

Standard fittings such as the alloy wheels and external gas and shower points add to an upmarket feel. Warranties are five years for the coachbuilt bodywork, two for the conversion/habitation and three for the base vehicle.



Clockwise from top left: a well-equipped kitchen; plenty of storage options; lounge could cater for six; smart, well-appointed cab



DAYTIME

You can thank that drop-down bed for what really is a magnificent use of space in the daytime quarters. The lounge is far roomier than it has any right to be in such a diminutive vehicle. There's a large fixed pedestal leg table that adjusts for height (electrically) and fore-and-aft (manually), around which are an L-shaped settee (offside) and a double settee with generously high backrest (nearside). It takes a matter of moments to swivel the cab seats, which sit at the same height as the settees. You'll be able to cater for six in comfort here.

The side windows come with cassette blinds and flyscreens, while the large sunroof over the cab has a concertina blind and flyscreen. The rest of the overcab pod offers open storage that's easy to get at from the bed.

NIGHT-TIME

At the flick of a switch the bed glides down (you'll still need a ladder for access) – its one-piece mattress rests on sprung slats for ventilation and extra support.

“The lounge is far roomier than it is entitled to be in such a diminutive vehicle”

TECHNICAL



Price (as tested)	£76,995 OTR
Engine	2.0-litre turbo-diesel Euro 6D
Power	168bhp (125kW) @ 3,500rpm
Torque	299 lb ft (405Nm) @ 1,500-2,500rpm
Transmission	Six-speed automatic, FWD
MRO	2,989kg
MTPLM	3,500kg
User payload	511kg
Overall length	19ft 7in (5.98m)
Overall width	7ft 7in (2.30m)
Overall height	9ft 6in (2.89m)
Max internal height	6ft 8in (2.03m)
Fuel/tank/econ	Diesel/15.4gals (70 litres)/28-32mpg
<small>Figures from manufacturer's literature</small>	

DRIVING

I didn't get to drive this Tessoro as far as I wanted, but I've certainly done the miles with this Ford Transit engine and transmission combination, and it's an absolute peach. The 168bhp motor means there's plenty of power as well as torque when you need it, while the smooth auto gearbox keeps everything relaxed. Most folk would be disappointed if they couldn't beat 30mpg.

A well-appointed cab features a multi-function steering wheel, while the infotainment system takes centre stage with its 9in touchscreen, rear-view camera and sat-nav, as well as the usual DAB radio and MP3/Bluetooth connectivity. The location of the handbrake – to the driver's right – and its drop-down operation makes it all the easier to swivel the cab seats, which have adjustable armrests.

A handy upgrade for 2023 is FordPass, an app that warns you if you've left your vehicle unlocked, keeps an eye on fluid levels/servicing etc, can locate your vehicle for you if you've lost it and will also warn you of any attempted break-in.



To see test videos, download the Digital Magazine via the App Store or Google Play. Remember to search for 'CAMC Magazine'.



Above from left: drop-down double bed; good washroom with opaque window; fittings for a bike rack at rear

The only negative is that the bed does cut across the habitation doorway to a degree.

You can also make a double from the lounge seating. It's a bit of a jigsaw but, handily, there's a diagram on the inside of the wardrobe door.

KITCHEN

The electric roof vent, cooker extractor unit and medium rooflight (even the larger than average window) mean there is masses of ventilation and light in the kitchen. And I'm definitely more than happy with the rest of this area, not least for the relatively large expanse of permanent worktop to the left of the circular sink. That's supplemented by a slot-in extension at the opposite end.

The cooker is a Thetford Triplex model with two gas burners and an electric hotplate. The grill and oven are combined, which helps save space. The kitchen extends across the back, where you'll find the Thetford 145-litre fridge/freezer and a turntable microwave oven above it at a convenient height.

WASHROOM

There's a step up to negotiate after opening the solid door to the washroom. It's all very well appointed inside: a separate, lined shower cubicle has twin drainage holes over wooden duckboard and a drop-down rail for hanging wet clothes. Could you want for more? A riser bar for the shower, maybe?

There's a swivel-bowl toilet on a pedestal, plus a fixed basin. An upper locker with double mirrored doors and another locker under the basin ensures

that storage space is good. Fittings include a towel rail, toothbrush mug and soap dispenser. There's an opaque window to help with ventilation.

DETAILS

The central locking now extends to the habitation door, which is an upgrade for 2023. There are quite a few other nice touches: an illuminated wardrobe; burgundy-coloured cushions (scatter and bolster); solar panel; mains and double USB sockets in the lounge; external fitting thermal insulation screen; and Trackstar tracking system, with your first year's subscription paid for.

Storage all round is excellent, bearing in mind that this is a 6m-long vehicle. That includes exterior access to the nearside settee base and locker space behind the wardrobe.

VERDICT

An excellent blend of practicality, UK-friendly specification levels, a bit of continental flair and razor-sharp pricing. Ford's Transit base and the highly usable 6m overall length ices this particularly tempting cake.

i You can insure this motorhome with the Club for **£489.37** per year. Please see camc.com/insurance or call 0345 504 0334 for further details.

RATINGS

82% BUILD QUALITY

88% DRIVING

75% DAYTIME

75% NIGHT-TIME

80% KITCHEN

79% WASHROOM

84% DETAILS

80% OVERALL

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*Quote (correct as of 24 February 2023) is for the model tested worth £76,995 OTR with a working tracker fitted. Based on a 57-year-old male living in Kent, with a maximum no claims bonus (unprotected) coming from a vehicle of similar value/experience, who has no accidents, claims or convictions and keeps the vehicle on a drive, driving 3,000 miles a year, with a £650 damage, fire and theft excess. Subject to underwriting. 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.