



# Towcar Awards: other cars tested

**With our top towcar revealed last month, all that's left is to highlight the performance of the 27 remaining cars involved in the Towcar Awards 2009. Here's how we tested those vehicles and their towing credentials**

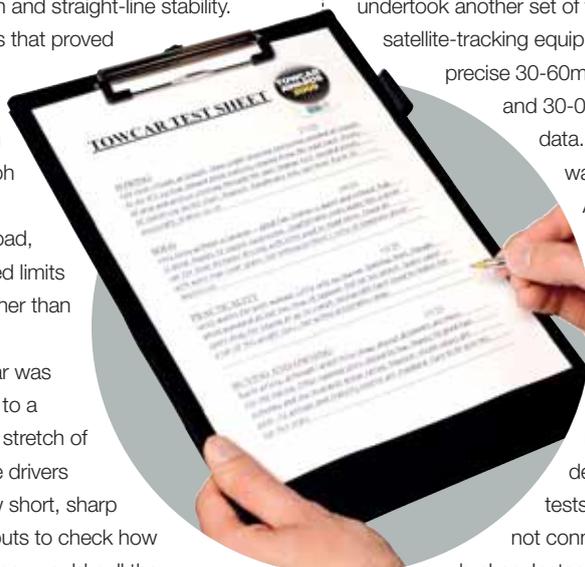
## 1 Towing

Our driving judges took each car through a set test route, matched to a Swift caravan weighted to be an 85 per cent match (or the legal towing limit, whichever was lower). Every drive started by towing up to 60mph on a straight track, in order to assess acceleration and straight-line stability. Next, outfits that proved stable at 60mph were driven up to 70mph to replicate towing abroad, where speed limits may be higher than in the UK.

Each car was then driven to a wide, open stretch of track where drivers made a few short, sharp steering inputs to check how quickly the car would pull the caravan straight, as it might have to do after

overtaking a lorry on a windy day. Each car was also driven through a low-speed slalom to give the brakes a workout and assess cornering, and also for another chance to test the strength of the engine. Finally, each outfit performed a hill start on a 1-in-6 slope.

Meanwhile, the performance judge undertook another set of tests, using satellite-tracking equipment to give precise 30-60mph acceleration and 30-0mph braking data. Each caravan was fitted with the AL-KO ATC system, which in normal use applies the caravan's brakes if the onset of instability is detected. For our tests, the system was not connected to the brakes. Instead, the ATC unit was wired up to a laptop computer to record



whether or not the caravan remained stable when decelerating from 60mph. It also recorded the van's behaviour through the lane-change test (a violent swerve first one way then the other, repeated at increasing speeds). This really revealed which cars would remain stable and in control in an emergency.

## 2 Solo

The scores for solo driving are based on What Car? magazine's road-test verdicts. What Car? has been the car-buyer's champion for well over 30 years, and its tests are renowned as some of the most detailed and objective in the business. The magazine tests nearly 500 models every year.

Every car listed was assessed for ride and handling, performance and refinement. Passenger space also formed part of this section of the test.

## 3 Practicality

The Towcar Awards aren't just about driving. We're also looking for cars that will make your towing easier, safer and more practical. That's why our practicality testers tried to fit a typical load of holiday luggage in the boot of every car. The testers also checked for a noseweight limit that was appropriate to the kerbweight of the car, the ease with which towing mirrors could be fitted, and good, clear towing advice in the manual.

Was the car in question fitted with stability control, preferably with a towing-specific mode? Was there a full-size spare wheel and, if so, how easily could it be accessed? If the spare turned out to be a space-saver, was it suitable for towing? These were the types of questions our practicality judges set out to answer.

## 4 Buying and owning

Even the most stable towcar in the world may not be the right car for you if it's over-priced, too thirsty or short on safety equipment. That's what the buying and owning section assessed. We've looked at likely discounted prices (the What Car? Target Price) for every car, and considered how much each model would be worth a few years down the road. Running costs have also been taken into account, as has the provision of airbags and other safety equipment.

Towcar Awards coverage is now available on the Club's website [campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/towcar-awards](http://campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/towcar-awards)



Up to 1,425kg

### Ford Focus 1.6 TDCi 110 Econetic DPF 5dr

List price £18,045

Target price £14,976

Kerbweight 1,357kg

85% match 1,153kg

Max towing weight 1,300kg

Towball limit 75kg

**LAST YEAR**, the Ford Focus 2.0 TDCi was our class champion. This year it was

back to defend that title, but in the form of the 1.6 TDCi Econetic, the greenest model in the line-up.

By now you'll have realised the Focus hasn't notched up another class win. That's in no small part due to a poor performance in the hill-start test. However hard our judges pulled on the handbrake, it refused to hold car and caravan still on the 1-in-6 slope. Once under way, the engine had its work cut out pulling the outfit to the top of

### WE SAY

<b>Towing</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Solo</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Practicality</b>	★ ★ ★ ○ ○
<b>Buying &amp; Owning</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Verdict</b>	★ ★ ★ ○ ○

A good car let down by a poor hill start and a hopeless manual.

the hill cleanly.

It might be economical – official figures promise 65.7mpg on the combined cycle – but it is also slow. The Focus took 19.7 seconds to go from 30-60mph.

On the other hand, the Ford was every bit as assured as the Golf through the lane-change test. In a straight line it felt unshakeable up to the legal limit and beyond.

Without the burden of a caravan in tow, the Focus is sharp and responsive to drive, and proves that green cars don't have to be dull. It's spacious, too.

However, some inadequate towing information in the handbook contributed to a poor score for practicality.

Up to 1,425kg



### Kia Soul 1.6 CRDi 2

List price £12,495

Target price £12,104

Kerbweight 1,345kg

85% match 1,143kg

Max towing weight 1,300kg

Towball limit 52kg

**KIAS HAVE** a strong reputation as towcars, so we were intrigued to see how the latest small car stacked up. The Kia Soul took 17.8 seconds to go from 30-60mph – respectable, but a full three seconds slower than the VW.

The hill start also proved a test. The handbrake held with a firm pull, but the driver needed a deft balance of clutch and

throttle to get to the top of the hill without burning the clutch or spinning the wheels.

While the engine isn't the strongest, stability was acceptable at the legal limit. In the lane-change test the Soul was one of the most sta-

ble small cars, dragging the van behind it at impressive speeds. However, its low noseweight lost marks with the practicality judges. If you own a trailer tent, 52kg might be enough, but most new caravans exceed this figure, even unladen.

The hard plastic in the cabin also disappoints, yet for a small car, there's lots of room.

### WE SAY

<b>Towing</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Solo</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Practicality</b>	★ ★ ★ ○ ○
<b>Buying &amp; Owning</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Verdict</b>	★ ★ ★ ○ ○

Good value and cheap to run, but hampered by the low noseweight.

Up to 1,425kg



### Subaru Impreza 1.5R

List price £12,730

Target price £11,930

Kerbweight 1,385kg

85% match 1,177kg

Max towing weight 1,500kg

Towball limit 75kg

**AS ONE** of the cheapest four-wheel-drive cars on sale, the Subaru ought to make a great towcar. In practice, it's very good at some things and very bad at others.

The 1.5-litre petrol engine isn't strong enough to pull 2.5 tonnes of car and caravan with any vigour. We found the car wouldn't hold 60mph in top gear, even on the flat.

In spite of the muscle shortage, the Impreza did well on its hill start. With low-ratio gears selected, it climbed the 1-in-6 hill with ease.

It also coped well with the slalom test, proving nimble and stable at the same time.

Our practicality testers were impressed by the towing information in the manual, and would have given higher marks if the car had coped with all the holiday luggage.

If you're towing a trailer tent to a grassy pitch, the Impreza is a sound choice, but it's not powerful enough to cope with most caravans.

### WE SAY

<b>Towing</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Solo</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Practicality</b>	★ ★ ★ ○ ○
<b>Buying &amp; Owning</b>	★ ★ ★ ★ ○
<b>Verdict</b>	★ ★ ★ ○ ○

A stable, all-weather towcar, but not enough pull for an 85 per cent match.



1,425-1,574kg

### Citroën Berlingo 1.6 HDi 110 XTR

List price £15,065

Target price £14,483

Kerbweight 1,502kg

85% match 1,277kg

Max towing weight 1,300kg

Towball limit 55kg

**WITH THE** Berlingo, you get a lot for your money. There's loads of space inside for five people to be comfortable, and plenty of room for luggage, too. The boot coped with our holiday luggage with room to spare.

The van-like looks don't promise much for the driver, but more than one judge was surprised by the car. In spite of having just 177lb.ft of torque from the 1.6-litre diesel, the Citroën

was happy to pull at 60mph in top gear,

although it wouldn't reach 70mph.

On the hill, the handbrake held the outfit without undue force, and with a little clutch slip, car and van were soon at the top of the slope.

When really pushed through the lane-change test, however, the car was less happy, and the AL-KO ATC showed the caravan moving around when slowing down.

The low noseweight is a more serious issue – a limit of 55kg just isn't enough, and undermines an otherwise impressive showing.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

A practical towcar hampered by a low noseweight limit.



1,425-1,574kg

### Skoda Superb 2.0 TDI PD SE

List price £19,365

Target price £18,027

Kerbweight 1,565kg

85% match 1,330kg

Max towing weight 1,800kg

Towball limit 85kg

**THE FIRST** thing you notice is how big it is. Priced to compete with the likes of Ford's Mondeo and Vauxhall's Insignia, it has as much space inside as some luxury saloons. Head and legroom in the back are in a different league to most family cars.

Considering how spacious it is, the car is keenly priced. It shouldn't cost too much to run, promising 47.9mpg on the

combined cycle.

However, Skoda is

at the back of the queue when it comes to the new generation of VW Group common-rail diesel engines. This car has the old PD engine, which performs strongly enough but is noisy.

With a 'van in tow, the car feels composed up to the legal limit. Push a little further and it needs some correction. The AL-KO ATC system showed the 'van starting to sway if the driver backed off quickly, yet it coped well with the lane-change test.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

Spacious and good value, but the engine is too noisy.



1,575-1,724kg

### Mazda 6 2.2D 163 TS2 Estate

List price £19,665

Target price £18,221

Kerbweight 1,575kg

85% match 1,339kg

Max towing weight 1,600kg

Towball limit 75kg

**EVERY DRIVER** was impressed by just how stable the Mazda 6 was, right up to the legal limit and beyond.

There was the slightest twitch from the caravan when slowing from high speeds but without the AL-KO ATC system to monitor the outfit's behaviour, it might not have been noticed.

Through the lane-change the Mazda took charge, holding the intended course even while the

van swayed around behind.

The Mazda was quick along the straights as well as through the cones, going from 30-60mph in 13.1 seconds. The 2.2-litre is an addition to the range. It's quieter than the old 2.0-litre,

although there is more road noise than in the Skoda.

Unfortunately, our practicality testers weren't as impressed with the Mazda as the driving judges were. While the boot was big enough for a full load of luggage, the absence of a spare wheel was a black mark. Instead, there's a puncture repair kit, which Mazda doesn't recommend for a towcar.

With such a keen price, good economy and strong resale values, we still rate the Mazda highly.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

A quick and stable towcar with lots of luggage space.



1,575-1,724kg

### Subaru Forester 2.0D XSn

List price £25,960

Target price £24,737

Kerbweight 1,625kg

85% match 1,381kg

Max towing weight 2,000kg

Towball limit 80kg

#### THE FORESTER'S

not a bad car, but its soft suspension failed to deliver the control and stability of the best towcars. At a steady 60mph, it felt stable enough, but started to wander at higher speeds – nothing alarming, but enough to keep drivers on their toes. A definite wobble when slowing from high speeds also

undermined confidence, and the soft suspension allowed too much pitching under acceleration and braking.

On the plus side, the strong engine had no trouble hauling car and 'van to the top of the

hill, and the boot coped with all but one luggage item.

The price may be high, but this is the range-topping model and comes complete with satnav and leather upholstery. Economy of 44.1mpg on the combined cycle is good for a 4x4, but owners will need to save at the pumps because the Subaru doesn't hold its value well.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

A disappointing car, but well equipped and economical.





1,575-1,724kg

### Suzuki Grand Vitara 2.4 SZ4 5dr

**List price** £16,500  
**Target price** £15,607  
**Kerbweight** 1,627kg  
**85% match** 1,383kg  
**Max towing weight** 1,850kg  
**Towball limit** 85kg

**THAT PRICE** isn't a misprint. The Grand Vitara really does cost just £16,500. You don't just get a lot of metal for your money – the list of toys is impressively long, too. Climate control, cruise control and alloy wheels are standard.

For a petrol-powered 4x4, the official combined fuel consumption of 31.3mpg isn't too bad. However, the relative lack of

mid-range muscle is immediately obvious. The Grand Vitara will pull an

85 per cent match at 60mph and beyond, but the engine needs to work hard to get there.

The Suzuki put in a mixed performance in the lane-change test. By 4x4 standards, the hill start was unimpressive, and the handbrake had to be pulled hard before it would hold.

The large boot with 12V socket and easily accessible spare wheel helped the Grand Vitara to a strong score in the practicality section.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★☆☆☆  
**Solo** ★★★★★  
**Practicality** ★★★★★  
**Buying & Owning** ★★★★★  
**Verdict** ★★★★★

Not the best, but impressive value for money nonetheless.



1,575-1,724kg

### Peugeot 308 SW 2.0 HDi 136 Sport

**List price** £19,895  
**Target price** £18,112  
**Kerbweight** 1,650kg  
**85% match** 1,403kg  
**Max towing weight** 1,650kg  
**Towball limit** 70kg

**THE 308 SW** makes a good towcar, but it's up against strong rivals. It proved stable at a steady cruise but was less happy slowing down from high speeds, when the AL-KO ATC system picked up more movement than usual. Braking was below average, needing 11.6 metres to come to a halt from 60mph.

At high speeds through the lane-change test, car and 'van

couldn't agree on which direction to take.

For a front-wheel-drive car, the 308 performed well on the hill start. The handbrake held easily, and while there was some wheelspin to contend with, car and 'van had no trouble reaching the top of the slope.

Inside, the rear seats can be removed to give lots of luggage space. With the seats in place, our practicality testers found room for all but one luggage item. We'd have preferred a full-size spare wheel though.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★★★★  
**Solo** ★★★★★  
**Practicality** ★★★★★  
**Buying & Owning** ★★★★★  
**Verdict** ★★★★★

A solid all-rounder, but not the best in this weight class.



1,575-1,724kg



1,575-1,724kg



### Toyota Avensis 2.2 D-4D T4 4dr

**List price** £21,560  
**Target price** £20,124  
**Kerbweight** 1,655kg  
**85% match** 1,407kg  
**Max towing weight** 1,800kg  
**Towball limit** 75kg

**THE TOYOTA** Avensis is a quiet, unassuming kind of car. It doesn't grab you instantly, but by the end of the test it had earned everyone's respect.

The 2.2-litre diesel engine has enough pull to make the most of any overtaking opportunity. However, sixth gear is too high

for towing. Responsive brakes stopped the Avensis from 30mph in just 10.4 metres.

The lane-change manoeuvre showed a shortage of grip compared with a Mazda 6 or Skoda Superb. Backing off the throttle from 60mph also caused the caravan to move

around more than expected.

Cabin space isn't in the same league as the Skoda, but unless you travel regularly with tall adults in the back, there's enough room for most needs. A full load of holiday luggage could be squeezed into the boot, although we would have preferred a full-sized spare to the more compact space-saver.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★★★★  
**Solo** ★★★★★  
**Practicality** ★★★★★  
**Buying & Owning** ★★★★★  
**Verdict** ★★★★★

A very reliable, safe and capable towcar with plenty of pull.

### Audi A4 Avant 2.0 TDI 170 Quattro S-line

**List price** £30,380  
**Target price** £27,577  
**Kerbweight** 1,670kg  
**85% match** 1,420kg  
**Max towing weight** 1,600kg  
**Towball limit** 80kg

#### IF UNSHAKEABLE

stability at all speeds is your priority, the A4 delivers. However violently we attacked the lane-change test, it remained on course and dragged the caravan along behind.

Driven more sedately, the

Audi still gave the same reassuring sense of control. Even backing off sharply failed to make the caravan sway.

Need to slow down in a hurry? No problem. The A4 stopped dead from 30mph in just 10.2 metres. It also performed well on the hill start, although some

clutch slip was necessary to climb the slope. It was reassuring to know four-wheel drive was there if needed.

The practicality testers rated the Audi just as highly as the drivers, noting the well-written handbook and the 12V socket in the boot.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★★★★  
**Solo** ★★★★★  
**Practicality** ★★★★★  
**Buying & Owning** ★★★★★  
**Verdict** ★★★★★

An exceptionally stable towcar and practical with it – but expensive.



1,575-1,724kg

### Toyota Avensis Tourer 2.0 D-4D TR

**List price** £20,255  
**Target price** £19,059  
**Kerbweight** 1,670kg  
**85% match** 1,420kg  
**Max towing weight** 1,600kg  
**Towball limit** 75kg

**WE TESTED** the Tourer (estate) version of the Avensis with the 2.0-litre diesel rather than the 2.2 fitted to the saloon. How much difference does losing 200cc make? Quite a lot, actually. The Tourer moved from 30-60mph in 18.7 seconds – a full 3.5 seconds slower than the four-door.

At a steady 60mph, the Avensis was stable. At higher

speeds, it was less happy, and was pushed around by the 'van

through the lane-change test.

Towing electrics were not as easy to reach as we'd have liked, and a full-size spare would be better than a compact tyre. There was plenty of room in the boot, though.

Despite its high price tag, the car should be cheap to run. Official figures promise 54.3mpg on the combined cycle. Very little should go wrong with it – Toyota finished fourth in the 2009 JD Power Customer Satisfaction Survey.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★★★★  
**Solo** ★★★★★  
**Practicality** ★★★★★  
**Buying & Owning** ★★★★★  
**Verdict** ★★★★★  
 Dependable and economical, but not as stable as the best.



1,575-1,724kg

### VW Tiguan 2.0 170 4Motion SE

**List price** £22,930  
**Target price** £20,723  
**Kerbweight** 1,684kg  
**85% match** 1,431kg  
**Max towing weight** 2,200kg  
**Towball limit** 100kg

**ALTHOUGH NOT** among this year's award-winners, the Tiguan is one of the star performers in the middle weight class.

For a 4x4, it's an agile, fun car to drive solo, and enjoyable with a 'van on the back. It never felt less than secure, right up to the legal limit and beyond. In cornering, there was less roll than you'd expect for such a tall car, and plenty of

grip, too. AL-KO ATC data showed

the 'van stayed true when slowing down. The strong engine pulled the car from 30-60mph in just 15.2 seconds, and the brakes were just as responsive.

Inside, there's space for four adults, though five is a squeeze, and boot space is rather tight.

Expect to pay more than £20,000 for the Tiguan. You should get back an impressive 47 per cent of list price after three years, and fuel bills should be low at the official 42.8mpg.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★★★★  
**Solo** ★★★★★  
**Practicality** ★★★★★  
**Buying & Owning** ★★★★★  
**Verdict** ★★★★★  
 Comfortable, fun and stable, but short on luggage space.



1,725-1,899kg



### Renault Koleos 2.0 dCi Privilege 175 4x4

**List price** £25,565  
**Target price** £23,039  
**Kerbweight** 1,730kg  
**85% match** 1,471kg  
**Max towing weight** 2,000kg  
**Towball limit** 100kg

**WITH ITS** soft suspension, the Renault Koleos puts the emphasis on comfort. That's not always a recipe for stable towing, but the Koleos exceeded expectations.

Through the lane-change test it leaned heavily, but the caravan followed obediently behind.

Backing off from high speeds failed to provoke any instability, either.

The Renault's 2.0-litre diesel engine is very smooth and quiet. It's quick with it – the Koleos went from 30-60mph in 13.8 seconds.

Sadly, there's not much room inside. The cabin is well built and the design

is attractive, but the back is short on legroom. The boot wouldn't take a full load of luggage either.

Economy is a disappointing 37.7mpg on the combined cycle.

At over £25,000, the Koleos is expensive, but the long list of standard equipment on Privilege models helps to justify the price.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★★★★  
**Solo** ★★★★★  
**Practicality** ★★★★★  
**Buying & Owning** ★★★★★  
**Verdict** ★★★★★  
 Expensive to buy and run, but a comfortable and stable towcar.



1,725-1,899kg



### Jaguar XJ 2.7 TDVi Executive

**List price** £44,599  
**Target price** £37,436  
**Kerbweight** 1,734kg  
**85% match** 1,474kg  
**Max towing weight** 1,900kg  
**Towball limit** 76kg

**LAST YEAR'S** class winner is still one of our favourite cars in 2009.

Everything about towing with a Jaguar XJ feels so effortless. The 2.7-litre diesel may not be as powerful as the 3.0-litre in the Jag XF, but with 321lb.ft of torque to call upon, it's never short of punch.

The chassis is a perfect

match for the engine. No other car blends comfort and control quite so well, smoothing every bump but tackling the lane-change manoeuvre with the poise of a sports car.

Rear-seat space is modest for a luxury car.

Even in the front the XJ feels cosy compared with Jag's newer XF. Yet there is something appealing about the mix of traditional design and modern technology in the cabin.

The XJ also takes almost a full load of holiday luggage.

It's due to be replaced, so we can't fully recommend it this year, but epic discounts may help make your mind up for you.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★★★★  
**Solo** ★★★★★  
**Practicality** ★★★★★  
**Buying & Owning** ★★★★★  
**Verdict** ★★★★★  
 A classic in the making, and an exceptional towcar.





1,725-1,899kg

### Land Rover Freelander TD4e HSE

List price £32,595

Target price £28,967

Kerbweight 1,770kg

85% match 1,505kg

Max towing weight 2,000kg

Towball limit 150kg

#### THE LOWER-CASE 'e'

on the end of TD4 means this offroader has had a green makeover. The Freelander now uses a stop-start system to cut the engine when stationary. This knocks eight per cent from the carbon dioxide output (down to 179g/km). It's not so green when towing, however, since the system won't work if it registers that a caravan or trailer has been hitched.

Otherwise the Freelander is much the same as before. The ride remains comfortable, but it can still tackle an emergency lane-change with poise. Some rivals have more rear-seat space, but the deep windows give a good view out.

A bigger boot would improve the practicality score, but we were pleased to find a full-sized spare.

If the high price puts you off, then remember that less well-equipped versions start from £21,295.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

Greener than before and still holds its own against the newer rivals.



1,725-1,899kg

### Audi Q5 2.0 TDI Quattro S-line

List price £31,430

Target price £28,999

Kerbweight 1,805kg

85% match 1,534kg

Max towing weight 2,000kg

Towball limit 80kg

#### OUR JUDGES

were very impressed with the Audi Q7 last year, and the Q5 proved very nearly as capable.

The ride is too stiff when driven solo, but with a 'van on the back it settles down. Stability at 70mph is every bit as good as at 60mph, and only a handful of 4x4s could get close to the Q5 through the lane-change test. AL-KO ATC data showed no wobble when

slowing down. The Q5 took just 14.7 seconds to go from 30-70mph, its responsive brakes stopping car and 'van from 30mph in just ten metres.

However, the pedals are offset to the right, which is hard to excuse in a £30,000 car. It's also easy to catch the footrest when pressing the clutch pedal.

Otherwise, the cabin is very practical. Five can travel in comfort, and the huge boot swallowed every item of holiday luggage.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

Exceptionally stable, but the driving position is annoying.



1,725-1,899kg

### Volkswagen Caddy Maxi Life 2.0 TDI

List price £17,806

Target price £17,044

Kerbweight 1,809kg

85% match Not legal

Max towing weight 1,440kg

Towball limit 80kg

**THIS IS** a big car at a modest price. It's huge inside, with space for seven passengers. However, we couldn't fit in a full load of holiday luggage.

More damningly, the Caddy won't tow an 85 per cent match due to the low towing limit – a shame, because it towed

reasonably well. The handbrake held firm on the hill start and the slope was tackled with little wheelspin. The 30-60mph sprint took 17.6 seconds. There was no sway from the 'van slowing from 60mph, and the car was tidy in the lane-change test.

Driven solo, the Caddy feels like what it is – a van converted into an MPV. It's noisy inside at motorway speeds, and the ride is rather bumpy. The seating isn't as flexible as in most modern people carriers, so it is harder to juggle passenger and luggage space. Equipment levels are modest, and we'd like to see more safety kit fitted as standard.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

Lots of passenger space, but let down by a low towing limit.



1,725-1,899kg

### Mitsubishi Outlander 2.2 DI-DC Diamond

List price £27,999

Target price £26,029

Kerbweight 1,810kg

85% match 1,539kg

Max towing weight 2,000kg

Towball limit 100kg

#### THE OUTLANDER

makes a decent towcar, but it's up against some very good opposition. We have no complaints about the way it behaves in an emergency lane-change, and when slowing from the legal limit, the AL-KO ATC system showed very little movement from the caravan.

However, some judges felt less easy with the car at speeds above 60mph. The brake test was no better than average, taking 1.5 metres longer than the Q5 to stop from 30mph. The cabin has space for seven, although

seats six and seven are short on space. With these seats in the floor, there's room to cope with a full load of holiday clobber. The spare wheel can be easily accessed even with a full boot.

At £1 under £28,000, the Outlander isn't cheap. However, 4x4s aren't flying out of show-rooms, so haggling could knock £2,000 off the price.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

Tows well, but pricey and up against a high standard of opposition.





1,725-1,899kg

### Citroën C5 Tourer 2.2 HDi Exclusive

List price £23,395

Target price £21,232

Kerbweight 1,840kg

85% match 1,564kg

Max towing weight 1,900kg

Towball limit 77kg

**THE C5** 2.2 HDi adeptly blends performance, price and economy. It pulled the caravan from 30-60mph in a brisk 14.6 seconds. The engine was smooth and quiet as well as strong.

Through the lane-change test, the C5 couldn't match the very best, but was impressive nonetheless.

Although it performed well

when really pushed, the vague steering and some pitching

over sharp bumps didn't inspire confidence. However, once used to the Citroën's ways, most judges found the car stable at the legal limit and beyond.

The large boot swallowed the full load of holiday luggage, although rear-seat space could be better. Buyers can expect a healthy discount on the list price. That's just as well, since you'll only get back 33 per cent of the original cost after three years.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

A refined car for long-distance towing, and practical, too.



1,900kg & over

### Audi A6 Allroad 3.0 TFSI Quattro

List price £39,340

Target price £36,188

Kerbweight 1,915kg

85% match 1,628kg

Max towing weight 1,900kg

Towball limit 85kg

**THE AUDI** A6 Allroad was a class winner in 2007, and the arrival of a new petrol model has reminded us why we like Audi's 4x4 estate so much.

It may fill up at the green pump, but the 3.0-litre TFSI engine manages a diesel-like 309lb.ft of torque from just 2,500rpm, so there's no shortage of mid-range pull. The Allroad eats up the road like a Dobermann devours steak –

the 30-60mph sprint time of 7.9 seconds

was the quickest in this year's test. The hill start was no match for a car with this much muscle.

Its performance through the lane-change test was also exemplary. The Audi's steering feels too light at first, but proves faithful and accurate. Well-judged suspension means there's little body roll – even at speed you'd hardly know the 'van was there.

There's plenty of passenger space, and the boot swallowed all but one item of luggage.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆

As quick and practical as towcars get – but at a price.



1,900kg & over



1,900kg & over

### Dodge Journey 2.0 CRD SXT

List price £19,800

Target price £18,045

Kerbweight 1,975kg

85% match Not legal

Max towing weight 1,360kg

Towball limit 68kg

**THERE ARE** some positive things to be said about the Dodge Journey. There's room for seven in a cabin packed with thoughtful touches, such as storage space underneath the seat cushions. This is a car that has been cleverly designed with family life in mind.

It hasn't been designed for

towing, though. The towing limit of 1,360kg is hopeless, and well below an 85 per cent match. The towball limit of 68kg is also very low for a car this size.

Even with a 'van weighted to 1,360kg, acceleration was leisurely, and the 11.4 metres stopping distance from

30mph was disappointing. The Journey performed quite well through the lane-change test but the hill start revealed weaknesses.

Combined economy of 43.5mpg is impressive for a car of this size, and you'll get back about 41 per cent of the original price after three years. The Dodge is well priced for such a big car, but we can't recommend it for towing.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★☆☆
Solo	★★★☆☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★☆☆

An okay MPV, but very disappointing as a towcar.

### Ssangyong Kyron 270 SPR

List price £22,495

Target price £22,495

Kerbweight 2,053kg

85% match 1,745kg

Max towing weight 2,300kg

Towball limit 117kg

**THE KYRON**, like the other Ssangyongs tested this year, sells on value. This big, heavy 4x4 has a long list of standard equipment, yet its price compares favourably with poorly equipped models from other brands.

There's reasonable space inside for five, and the boot is huge – more than big enough

for a family fortnight away.

However, we were very disappointed by the Kyron's performance. It took a sluggish 19.9 seconds to pull the outfit from 30-60mph, and needed an extra 1.4 metres to stop from 30mph compared with

the Volvo.

Stability was a concern. Over-light steering didn't inspire confidence, and the AL-KO ATC picked up movement from the 'van when slowing from high speeds. Through the lane-change test the Kyron was slow to react, and the van pushed the back of the car.

Fuel economy of 29.7mpg on the combined cycle is basic.

#### WE SAY

Towing	★★★☆☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & Owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★☆☆

Cheap to buy for a big 4x4, but too sloppy as a towcar.



1,900kg & over

### Jeep Cherokee 2.8 CRD Limited Auto

**List price** £25,300  
**Target price** £23,164  
**Kerbweight** 2,060kg  
**85% match** 1,751kg  
**Max towing weight** 2,800kg  
**Towball limit** 140kg

**JEEP'S HERITAGE** in building 4x4s stretches back over 60 years, and it shows if you ever drive the Cherokee off-road. On Tarmac, it's far from perfect. The engine groans and clatters and the ride feels unsettled.

Hitch up a 'van and the ride improves a bit, but the engine struggles to haul almost four tonnes of car and 'van, moaning from 30-60mph in 18 seconds.

The Cherokee was one of the

worst cars in any class in the emergency lane-

change test, lurching from side to side and struggling to keep control of the 'van. Even when driving straight, corrections were needed. The brake pedal felt wooden, and the Jeep took 2.2 metres longer than the Audi Allroad to stop from 30mph. To be fair, the Jeep took the hill start in its stride in both two and four-wheel drive, though the handbrake needed a firm pull. The Cherokee comes with a long list of standard equipment, and 31.4mpg isn't bad for a big, automatic 4x4.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★☆☆☆  
**Solo** ★★☆☆☆  
**Practicality** ★★☆☆☆  
**Buying & Owning** ★★☆☆☆  
**Verdict** ★★☆☆☆

Big and brash, the Jeep's image exceeds its ability.



1,900kg & over

### Ssangyong Rexton 270 SPR

**List price** £24,995  
**Target price** £24,995  
**Kerbweight** 2,099kg  
**85% match** 1,784kg  
**Max towing weight** 3,200kg  
**Towball limit** 128kg

**THE REXTON** is Ssangyong's biggest 4x4. With a kerbweight of well over two tonnes, even big twin-axle 'vans should be suitable matches. You won't go short of kit, and there's an optional third row of seats.

However, the Rexton failed to inspire confidence when towing. The AL-KO ATC system picked up lots of movement from the 'van when

slowing down from the legal limit. That

said, it managed to perform much better in the lane-change test, although the light steering made it hard to place the car.

The hill start held no fear. As long as the handbrake was pulled firmly, it held the outfit, and with 296lb.ft of torque and four-wheel drive, car and 'van reached the top without fuss. There's enough space inside for five to get comfy, and the boot easily held a full load of luggage.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★☆☆☆  
**Solo** ★★☆☆☆  
**Practicality** ★★☆☆☆  
**Buying & Owning** ★★☆☆☆  
**Verdict** ★★☆☆☆

Big, heavy and good value, but there are plenty of better cars to tow with.

1,900kg & over



### Toyota Land Cruiser 3.0 D-4D Invincible Auto

**List price** £38,145  
**Target price** £33,294  
**Kerbweight** 2,265kg  
**85% match** 1,925kg  
**Max towing weight** 2,800kg  
**Towball limit** 130kg

**INVINCIBLE MIGHT** be an exaggeration, but this is one tough car. It's capable off-road, and with Toyota's well-deserved reputation for reliability, unlikely to let you down.

Driven solo, the Land Cruiser can feel ponderous, but it makes an impressive towcar, rarely

needing steering corrections to hold a straight course. The AL-KO ATC unit showed very little movement from the caravan when slowing down from 60mph.

For a car that doesn't like to be rushed, it handled the

lane-change test well, and the hill start might as well have been a speed bump for all the challenge it posed. If anything, our practicality testers were more impressed than the drivers. The boot took every item of luggage – there was a full-sized spare and a reasonably detailed handbook.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★☆☆☆  
**Solo** ★★☆☆☆  
**Practicality** ★★☆☆☆  
**Buying & Owning** ★★☆☆☆  
**Verdict** ★★☆☆☆

A big bruiser of a towcar, with lots of space for passengers and luggage.

1,900kg & over



### Land Rover Discovery TDV6 HSE

**List price** £45,725  
**Target price** £40,652  
**Kerbweight** 2,718kg  
**85% match** 2,310kg  
**Max towing weight** 3,500kg  
**Towball limit** 150kg

**LAST YEAR** the Discovery was our favourite big towcar. The new Volvo XC60 is better value and just does enough to beat the Discovery, but this Land Rover is still an exceptional car.

There's a huge amount of space inside. Even those in seats six and seven have enough room to make

themselves comfortable, and with the two rearmost seats folded, luggage room is superb.

Few cars can match the Discovery's supple ride, whether driven solo or with a caravan in tow. Bumps that are felt with a shudder in lesser cars

seem to disappear beneath the Land Rover's tyres. Yet it is still controlled enough for stable, relaxed towing. It's not as nimble in the lane-change manoeuvre as some rivals, and there's lots of body roll through corners, but it never feels sloppy.

It says a lot that, after testing about 140 towcars over the last three years, one of our judges has just bought a Discovery.

#### WE SAY

**Towing** ★★☆☆☆  
**Solo** ★★☆☆☆  
**Practicality** ★★☆☆☆  
**Buying & Owning** ★★☆☆☆  
**Verdict** ★★☆☆☆

Expensive to buy and run, but still an exceptional towcar.