

1900kg & above

True heavyweights capable of towing big twin-axle tourers. 4x4s take on an estate and an MPV



CLASS WINNER

Land Rover

Discovery 4 3.0 TDV6 XS

LIST PRICE : £41,740

TARGET PRICE : £39,496

KERBWEIGHT : 2583kg

85% MATCH : 2196kg

MAX TOWING WEIGHT : 3500kg

TOWBALL LIMIT : 150kg

*MODEL PICTURED IS HSE

THIS IS THE third time in four years the Land Rover Discovery has won

the heavyweight class, and this year's victory is its most emphatic.

The new Discovery 4 has preserved all that was good about the old Discovery 3, but has fixed its few flaws. The 3.0-litre engine delivers a much-improved performance and its revised suspension preserves the pillowy ride but now combines this with more precise handling.

It took just 12 seconds for the Discovery to tow from 30-60mph pulling a heavily loaded twin-axle tourer. That's 5.2 seconds less than



The Discovery 4's dash is well finished and easy to navigate

the old model needed to do it last year.

In spite of the engine's extra power and torque, it's hushed and quiet even when accelerating hard.

The lane-change test used to be a weakness for the Discovery, certainly compared with some German 4x4s such as the Audi Q7. This year the big Land Rover was more settled through the cones. Meatier, more direct steering helped the driver place car and caravan exactly where intended. Even at 35mph there was less roll than before and the caravan followed behind like a well-trained pet.

Stopping over four-and-a-half tonnes of car and caravan demands powerful brakes, and the Land Rover delivers, stopping from 30mph in just 10.6 metres. When

you're in less of a rush, it's easy to slow down the outfit smoothly.

The hill-start test has never caused the Discovery any trouble. The electronic parking brake held the outfit, then released smoothly allowing car and caravan a fuss-free drive to the top of the slope.

The Discovery has always been an enjoyable car to travel in, thanks to plentiful space for seven and a cossetting ride. It's now a more enjoyable car to drive, too. Leave the caravan behind and you really notice the extra speed and the more composed cornering.

The huge boot, full-size spare and self-levelling suspension ticked all the right boxes for our practicality judge, and resale values of 45% after three years soften the blow of the high price.



We can't imagine any owners complaining about the luggage space

We say...

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★★
An exceptional towcar, and a superb seven-seater 4x4.	



Mercedes-Benz
E350 CDI BlueEfficiency Sport Estate

LIST PRICE	£39,545
TARGET PRICE	£37,620
KERBWEIGHT	1925kg
85% MATCH	1636kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2100kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	84kg

IN A CLASS occupied mostly by big 4x4s, the Mercedes E350 CDI Estate is an excellent alternative.

It's hard to find much to criticise when towing with the E-Class. Performance is excellent, going from 30-60mph in just 10.4 seconds. Haul on the anchors and the big Merc is just as impressive, bringing the outfit to a halt in just 10.1 metres.

Even at 70mph the E-Class felt secure, and quickly pulled the caravan straight after any steering input. In the lane-change test, it was only when pushed hard on the final 35mph run that the caravan could be felt shoving the back of the car.

The reversing test and hill start were entirely stress-free, so long as the foot-operated parking brake was given a firm push to keep car and caravan still. Hardly any revs were needed for the 3.5-litre diesel to pull the outfit to the top of the hill.

The practicality judge was almost as impressed as the drivers. The E-Class Estate has long been known for its huge luggage capacity, and the latest generation is no different. Seats up gives 695 litres of space, easily enough to cope with our



The latest E-Class has a very comfortable driving position

holiday luggage load. Seats down, the capacity rises to 1950 litres.

The spare wheel is a space-saver rather than full-size, but Mercedes advises it can be used when towing. Further points were won by the Trailer Stability Programme and self-levelling suspension.

With a price tag just below £40,000, the Merc isn't cheap, but it should be worth 44% of its original price after three years.

We say...

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆
An excellent estate and a great towcar, albeit expensive.	



Kia
Sorento 2.2 CRDi KX2 4WD

LIST PRICE	£25,620
TARGET PRICE	£24,385
KERBWEIGHT	1975kg
85% MATCH	1679kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2500kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	100kg

THE NEW SORENTO has to be one of the most eagerly awaited towcars of 2010. Good car though it is, however, the Kia isn't quite the star we were hoping for.

Compared with the best cars in the heavyweight class, the Sorento didn't match their cast-iron stability.



The new Sorento's cabin looks modern and has space for seven

Slowing down from 70mph the driver could feel the caravan swaying slightly, and more slight steering inputs than normal were needed to keep the outfit straight.

Through the lane-change test the driver could feel the back of the car being pulled around, even on the low-speed run. We'd bet that if the car had been fitted with self-levelling suspension (a £500 option) it would have driven more like the Hyundai Santa Fe.

The Hyundai and Kia share the same engine, so it's no surprise

that performance is similar. The 30-60mph time of 14.2 seconds shows the 2.2-litre engine should easily pull any suitable match. It's not the quietest engine, but it is very responsive.

There has clearly been an effort to make the Sorento a practical towcar. With seats six and seven stowed away, there was room for our full load of holiday luggage, plus there's the reassurance of a full-size spare wheel should you get a puncture. Towing mirrors are easy to fit, and the 100kg noseweight limit is sensible for a car of this size.

If you plan to hang on to your next car for a good few years, then the Kia's seven-year warranty is reassuring, and fuel economy of 42.8mpg is a big improvement over the old Sorento. However, the Kia is £3000 more expensive than the Hyundai Santa Fe.

We say...

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & owning	★★★★☆
Verdict	★★★★☆
Not as solid at speed as the best but still a fine seven-seat 4x4.	

TOWCAR AWARDS 2010

UP TO 1424kg

1425-1574kg

1575-1724kg

1725-1899kg

1900kg & ABOVE



Volkswagen
Caravelle 2.0 BiTDI 180 SE
DSG

LIST PRICE	£35,285
TARGET PRICE	£33,586
KERBWEIGHT	2350kg
85% MATCH	1998kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2500kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	100kg

IF HALF-A-DOZEN rugby players need a lift to the pub, this is the car for them. Whichever of its seven seats you find yourself in, the Caravelle has plenty of head-, leg- and shoulder-room. What's more, plentiful luggage space and a full-size spare contribute to an excellent practicality score.

It tows reasonably well, too. The 2.0-litre engine has its work cut out towing two tonnes of caravan, but it

gets there in the end. Straight-line stability is good, although the back was pushed a bit in the lane-change test. The ride is uncomfortably stiff.

In the hill-start test, the handbrake needed a very firm tug before it held. The Caravelle pulled to the top of the slope easily enough, but the vibrations coming through the seat and floor as it did so aren't what you'd expect of a £35,000 car.

We say...

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★☆☆
Verdict	★★★★☆
Extremely spacious and practical, but too expensive.	

Audi
Q7 3.0 TDI Clean Diesel
S-Line Tiptronic

LIST PRICE	£46,220
TARGET PRICE	£42,521
KERBWEIGHT	2450kg
85% MATCH	2083kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	3200kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	130kg

WE'VE TESTED THE Audi Q7 3.0 TDI before, but this Clean Diesel version has been tweaked for better economy (31.7mpg on the combined cycle) and lower emissions (234g/km). The 2011 is cleaner still.

The Q7 makes a better towcar than the Lexus RX450h. The powerful engine sends 4.5 tonnes of car and caravan from 30-60mph in just 12.8 seconds, and the chassis is controlled and composed through the lane-change test even at 35mph.

The firm suspension keeps the outfit headed where the driver intends, but the ride is nothing like as comfortable as the Discovery's.

The practicality judge liked the self-levelling suspension, the fitted Trailer Stability Programme, and a space-saver spare suitable for towing.

S Line models are well equipped, which partly justifies the £46,220 price. Expect to get back 43% of the original price after three years.

We say...

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
Verdict	★★★★☆
Quick, stable and roomy seven-seat 4x4, but a pricey one.	



BEST VALUE
4x4 WINNER

Hyundai
Santa Fe 2.2 CRDi Style 7st

LIST PRICE	£22,370
TARGET PRICE	£21,065
KERBWEIGHT	1961kg
85% MATCH	1667kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2500kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	100kg

YOU KNOW THE Santa Fe is a good towcar after spending just a few miles inside, but it's easy to miss just how good it is until you consider the price. Costing just over £22,000 (less if you haggle), the big Hyundai is one of the best-value cars in this year's tests.

For more than £10,000 less than the XC60, and nearly £20,000 less than the Land Rover Discovery, this

is a car that will happily tow the majority of caravans, has room for seven and possesses an enviable list of standard equipment.

It might not dart through the lane-change test with the precision of an E-Class or Discovery, but nonetheless it stayed on course until the final 35mph run, at which point it started to slide. When backing off from 70mph, the AI-Ko ATC system showed some movement from the caravan, but thankfully this was never enough to alarm the driver.

The engine is the star of the show. It's much stronger than the old diesel fitted to the car we tested in 2007, pulling the Santa Fe and a twin-axle tourer from 30-60mph in just 13.5 seconds. Compared with the Discovery's 3.0-litre diesel it can sound gruff, but it's strong enough for any suitable match. You can expect 41.5mpg driving solo, according to official figures. That's excellent for a car which weighs the thick end of two tonnes.

Judging from the specification, someone at Hyundai knows what



The Santa Fe is a comfortable and responsive towcar

towcar drivers want. There's a normal spare wheel, a large boot (with five of the seven seats upright) and self-levelling suspension.



We say...

Towing	★★★★☆
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
Verdict	★★★★☆
Thoroughly deserves its award as the best-value 4x4.	

Land Rover

Range Rover Sport 3.0 TDV6 HSE

LIST PRICE	£52,390
TARGET PRICE	£49,303
KERBWEIGHT	2535kg
85% MATCH	2155kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	3500kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	150kg

THE RANGE ROVER Sport was close to the top of most judges' score sheets. The combination of a powerful, refined diesel engine, excellent stability and a luxurious cabin was hard to beat.

Sprinting from 30-60mph took just 11.6 seconds, making the Range Rover Sport one of the quickest cars in this year's tests.

The Sport's braking was even more impressive. It's not easy stopping over 4.5 tonnes from 30mph in just 10 metres, but that's exactly what the Range Rover's frisbee-sized disc brakes did.

Surprisingly, however, the Sport didn't perform as well as the Land Rover Discovery in the lane-change test, being pulled around slightly on the higher-speed runs. Even so, the AI-Ko ATC system showed there was little movement from the caravan when slowing down from 70mph.



Leave the caravan behind and you won't believe a 2.5-tonne 4x4 can corner so well. The steering has been much improved with the

2010 model, so the Sport is more satisfying to drive than before.

Land Rovers usually pick up high scores in the practicality

We say...

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

A great towcar but the Discovery is less costly and more capable.



Few cabins can match the luxury of the Range Rover Sport's

judging and the Range Rover Sport is no exception. There's room for a full load of holiday luggage, a full-size spare wheel, a Trailer Stability Programme and self-levelling suspension. Even the handbook's towing section is better laid out and more detailed than most.

We prefer the Discovery, though. It's less expensive, more comfortable and has two extra seats. Nonetheless, the Range Rover Sport is quite a car.

Lexus

RX450h SE-L

LIST PRICE	£52,435
TARGET PRICE	£50,629
KERBWEIGHT	2280kg
85% MATCH	1938kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2000kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	80kg

TO APPLY THE parking brake in the Lexus, you press it with your foot. To release it, you do the same. That's fine in most circumstances, but if you don't apply the brake firmly enough to hold the outfit on a slope you may release the brake by mistake when you try again.

Light, detached steering made it hard to place the Lexus precisely, and soft suspension allowed the caravan too much say through the lane-change test and when slowing from 70mph.

With the petrol engine and electric motor at full tilt, the 30-60mph sprint took just 11.3 seconds. The brakes did a good job, too, stopping the outfit in 11.1 metres from 30mph.

The boot coped with all of our holiday luggage and it's permissible to tow using the slim spare.

No other big 4x4 can match the RX450h's green credentials, with an official economy of 44.8mpg.

We say...

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

An impressive luxury 4x4, but doesn't tow as well as the best.



Toyota

Land Cruiser 3.0 D-4D LC5

LIST PRICE	£47,395
TARGET PRICE	£45,316
KERBWEIGHT	2475kg
85% MATCH	2104kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	3000kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	140kg

ON PAPER, THE Land Cruiser has the makings of a very practical towcar. The full-size spare wheel means there's no need to worry about towing after a puncture.

What's more, it's on the outside of the vehicle and not under the boot.

Mirrors are easy to fit, the noseweight limit is high, and self-levelling suspension should keep the car stable even with a fully loaded boot and a caravan hitched.

However, that on-paper promise doesn't translate on the road. We

found the Land Cruiser to be short of grip and wallowy. Even in a straight line some correction was needed to keep a constant course. The numb and over-light steering didn't help. Through the lane-change test the Land Cruiser was pulled around by the caravan at 30mph, let alone at 35mph.

To be fair, the Toyota's interior is spacious and equipment levels are generous, but you can buy better.

We say...

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

A long way short of the best towcars in the heaviest class.



MPV WINNER

Kia Sedona 2.2 CRDi 3 auto

LIST PRICE	£25,995
TARGET PRICE	£24,168
KERBWEIGHT	2287kg
85% MATCH	1944kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2000kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	85kg

AMID ALL THE expectation surrounding the new Sorento, the

Kia Sedona MPV almost arrived unnoticed at the test track. By the end of the test week, however, every judge agreed that it is a better towcar than its new 4x4 brother.

Where the Sorento sometimes felt a bit vague, the Sedona stuck doggedly to the driver's intended course. When slowing from 70mph the AI-Ko ATC system picked up a slight sway from the caravan, but nothing untoward.

Through the lane-change test the Sedona's back end was pushed

around by the caravan but again, the Kia always had the last word.

The biggest issue when towing was the challenge of putting so much power through the front wheels. The parking brake held the outfit on the 1-in-6 test slope, but it was easy to spin the wheels when pulling away. Having towed with a Sedona in the past, we know how this becomes a bigger problem in wet weather.

As an MPV, the Sedona puts space over sophistication. Even in the third



The Sedona offers lots of space and the auto shifts smoothly

row there's reasonable head and legroom, but the seats don't fold into the floor like those of many people carriers. Instead, you have to lift them out if you want more luggage space, and it's heavy work.

Fuel economy of 37.7mpg isn't great for a diesel MPV, and it's a shame that resale values aren't stronger. Even so, this is a lot of car for the money, and there's little it can't tow.



We say...

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
Verdict	★★★★★

A strong engine, a stable towcar and a spacious cabin.

Volvo XC60 D5 SE Geartronic

LIST PRICE	£32,745
TARGET PRICE	£30,994
KERBWEIGHT	1933kg
85% MATCH	1643kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2000kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	90kg

IT MAY HAVE lost out to the Discovery, but the Volvo XC60 can still hold its head high. This is an excellent towcar. The XC60 was one of the top performers in the lane-change test, firmly in control of the caravan at all speeds.

That same stability was evident all the way to 70mph. Even when slowing from high speeds the AI-Ko ATC system detected barely a twitch from the caravan.



The Volvo's dashboard is well made and very clearly laid out

The Volvo tackled our 1-in-6 test hill in its sleep, and the D5 engine pulled car and caravan from 30-60mph in 13 seconds. The same engine delivers easy overtaking when driven solo, and surprising economy for such a big, heavy car. Expect 40.4mpg. With or without a van, the ride is comfortable, and cornering is composed.

The luggage area has room for a full load of holiday bags and boxes. A compact spare wheel is available as a no-cost option. Volvo advises it may be used when towing.

The XC60's price has risen over the past 12 months, and the engine is much noisier than the Discovery's. However, the Volvo is still one of the best towcars on sale.

We say...

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
Verdict	★★★★★

Good to drive solo or towing. Economical for a big 4x4, too.



Top used cars 1900kg and above

Land Rover Discovery 2.7 TDV6 GS

12mthold	£24,765 (approx)
36mthold	£18,625 (approx)

IF IT SEEMS a cop out to recommend an old Discovery while at the same time giving an award to the new one, then so be it. The Discovery 3 was and is a great towcar.

The 2.7-litre engine can't match the power and torque figures of the new 3.0-litre, but it will still happily tow a twin-axle tourer from Newcastle to Newquay without a murmur of complaint.

The cabin may not be as well finished as the new model's, but it's just as practical, and the serene ride of this particular Discovery makes most German 4x4s feel harsh and uncomfortable.

Although some owners have problems with the complex air suspension and the handbrake control, the Discovery 2.7 TDV6 is more reliable than earlier generations of the car.