

Up to 1424kg

The best **small cars** punch above their kerbweight. Here you'll find the best choices for pulling light loads



"The Golf has plenty of poke for pulling any suitable match"

CLASS WINNER

Volkswagen Golf 2.0 TDI 140 Match 5dr

List price	£20,905
Target Price	£19,463
Kerbweight	1381kg
85% match	1174kg
Max towing weight	1500kg
Towball limit	75kg

THE VOLKSWAGEN GOLF easily won this class last year. In 2011, the competition was much tougher, but the Golf is still our favourite small towcar.

Some lightweight cars feel nervous with a caravan behind them. Not the Golf. Even in strong crosswinds our judges found the VW stable and reassuring, a subjective impression that was backed up by the AL-KO ATC sensors

on the caravan, which showed very little movement from the tourer.

Even the emergency lane-change test didn't upset the Golf's composure. It breezed through the first two runs. On the third and quickest pass through the cones the caravan started to slide, but the Golf stuck to the task and was never pulled off-line.

Unlike some small towcars, the Golf has plenty of poke for pulling



The dashboard is well laid out and the driving position is comfortable

any suitable match up to speed. The engine is smooth and pulls cleanly, holding 60mph in sixth gear without any complaint. There is still enough muscle in reserve to hit 70mph when it's legal to do so.

Unhook your tourer and the Golf is a satisfying car to drive. It rivals the Ford Focus for driver appeal, with precise steering



For a small hatchback, the Golf's 350-litre boot is a healthy size

and plenty of grip, but is still comfortable on rough roads.

For a small hatchback there's plenty of space inside, too. All but two items from our typical load of holiday luggage went into the boot.

Our practicality judge was also pleased to see comprehensive towing advice set out in the handbook and a compact spare that is suitable for towing.

We say...

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

VERDICT ★★★★★
The Volkswagen Golf is still the one to beat. Great to tow with and to own.

Renault

Clio Sport Tourer 1.5 dCi
88 Dynamique TomTom

List price	£15,800
Target Price	£14,020
Kerbweight	1270kg
85% match	1080kg
Max towing weight	1200kg
Towball limit	75kg

AS THE SECOND-lightest car in this year's tests, the Clio is quite limited in the tourers it can tow sensibly. It's also worth noting that if your car is loaded to its gross weight (the maximum allowed) then the towing limit falls from 1,200kg to 900kg.

These limitations aside, the Clio is a capable small towcar. We found the Renault stable at the legal limit, and it easily bettered the Skoda Fabia Scout in the lane-change test. Even on high-speed runs the Clio stayed on course and quickly dragged the caravan back into line.

The Renault out-performed most small cars in the hill-start test, too. The handbrake held without undue force, and although plenty of revs and clutch slip were needed, the outfit soon reached the top of the slope. The Clio also coped well in reverse.

Better ride comfort and quicker acceleration would have improved its scores. With 148lb.ft of torque, the



"Even on high-speed runs the Clio stayed on course"

Clio's 1.5-litre diesel engine is strong enough to pull a lightweight tourer up to 60mph, but it takes its time.

If you don't mind a leisurely pace you should be rewarded with excellent economy. Official figures promise 70.6mpg on the combined cycle, so running costs should be low. The *What Car?* Target Price shows healthy discounts are available, too.



There's a sense of style inside the Clio that many small cars lack

We say...

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

VERDICT ★★★★★
Good stability and a solid hill start, but short of punch for towing duties.

Skoda

Fabia Scout 1.6
TDI CR 90

List price	£15,285
Target Price	£12,810
Kerbweight	1224kg
85% match	1040kg
Max towing weight	1200kg
Towball limit	50kg

ALTHOUGH IT'S ECONOMICAL and roomy for a small car and had space for our full load of holiday luggage, the Skoda Fabia Scout is some way off the pace as a towcar.

None of our judges could persuade the handbrake to hold the outfit still on our 1-in-6 test hill. Getting to the top of the slope meant plenty of revs and clutch slip.

Even on the flat you won't be towing in a hurry. The Fabia took 26 seconds to go from 30-60mph. Braking is more its forte - it took a respectable 10.9 metres to stop car and caravan from 30mph.

At motorway speeds the Fabia was stable, but in the lane-change test the caravan began to push and shove at the back of the car.

We say...

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

VERDICT ★★★★★
Struggled in the hill start and lane change. Noseweight limit is too low.



Hyundai ix20 1.4 CRDi 90 Style

List price	£15,455
Target Price	£15,082
Kerbweight	1370kg
85% match	1165kg
Max towing weight	1300kg
Towball limit	75kg

THE IX20 HAS a lot going for it. Hyundai's five-year warranty is one of the longest around, official figures promise 65.7mpg, and low emissions mean there's no Vehicle Excise Duty to pay for the first year. What's more, there's a large boot and lots of passenger space.

However, we're not so keen on towing with the ix20. Although stable enough at motorway

speeds, the 'van took charge too readily in the lane-change test.

Performance is just about adequate, but you'll need to work the engine hard, and that means putting up with too much racket.

The handbrake held the outfit on our 1-in-6 hill, but lots of revs and clutch slip were needed to get moving in first gear and reverse.

We say...

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

VERDICT ★★★★★
The ix20 is impressively roomy and economical, but a modest towcar.

Top used car Up to 1424kg

Ford Focus 2.0 TDCi Zetec 5dr

12 months old	£12,260 (approx)
36 months old	£9,380 (approx)

Although the VW Golf is our favourite small towcar, the Mk6 version tested here isn't around in great numbers on the used market and any you do

find won't be cheap. So for a used small towcar we recommend the Golf's arch rival, the Ford Focus. The 2.0 TDCi has won this class as a new car and is good value second-hand. That's especially true now the new-shape Focus has arrived to push down prices.

The old Focus is just as good to drive as the new one. In fact, some say the new version is a little too

grown-up for its own good and the older car is more fun. The same firmly controlled suspension that makes the corners of your mouth turn up on a favourite road makes the Focus a very stable towcar. The 2.0-litre diesel is easily strong enough for towing but it still achieves good fuel economy.

There are plenty of cars to choose from, so look at a few examples before parting with your cash.



Ford
C-Max 1.6 TDCi
Titanium

List price	£20,195
Target Price	£18,619
Kerbweight	1390kg
85% match	1182kg
Max towing weight	1200kg
Towball limit	75kg

EVEN IN STRONG crosswinds the C-Max proved reassuringly stable. Through the lane-change test Ford's new MPV also scored highly, quickly pulling the caravan into line and going exactly where the driver intended.

However, the 1.6 TDCi engine's throttle response was sluggish, and although it pulled well in the

We say...

Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★○○
Buying & owning	★★★★○

VERDICT ★★★★★
Stable and roomy, but more pull from low revs would be welcome.

mid-range, the diesel tended to bog down at low revs. The C-Max struggled to pull car and caravan beyond 65mph into a headwind.

It has a large boot and good head- and legroom, but there's a bit too much wind noise at motorway speeds.

While not cheap, the Titanium is well equipped for the money.



Skoda
Roomster Scout 1.6
TDI CR 90

List price	£15,630
Target Price	£13,012
Kerbweight	1322kg
85% match	1124kg
Max towing weight	1200kg
Towball limit	50kg

WE'D TAKE THE Skoda Roomster Scout over the Skoda Fabia, partly because the handbrake held the outfit still on the 1-in-6 test hill - although it needed a very firm pull.

Considering how light it is, the Roomster was very stable, coping with the extremes of our lane-change test and a strong crosswind on the straights.

Cornering is neat and tidy, with some body-roll but plenty of grip.

There's lots of room inside, too. Luggage space is healthy, at 450 litres even with the rear seats in place.

However, there's no getting away from the disappointing 50kg noseweight limit, which many caravans will exceed.

We say...

Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★○○
Buying & owning	★★★★○

VERDICT ★★★★★
A stable towcar that is hampered by its low noseweight limit.



Citroën
C4 1.6 HDi (90) VTR+

List price	£18,445
Target Price	£15,430
Kerbweight	1388kg
85% match	1180kg
Max towing weight	1350kg
Towball limit	75kg

THE LATEST-GENERATION Citroën C4 is a sound alternative to the Volkswagen Golf and Ford Focus, but doesn't do enough to beat them.

On the plus side, it's a stylish car inside and out. The distinctive looks are matched by a distinctive drive, with a comfortable ride that smoothes over all but the roughest surfaces.

However, the Citroën's softer suspension means the C4 isn't as composed as the Golf when towing. It was fine through the lane-change test at low speeds, but on quicker runs the caravan made its presence felt and the C4 lost composure. It was happier towing in a straight line, but some drivers still found the car too 'floaty', and felt the vague steering didn't help make minor corrections accurately.

We're also disappointed that the Citroën took 11.7 metres to stop from 30mph, even on a dry track. The handbrake wouldn't hold car and caravan steady on a 1-in-6 slope, although good low-down pull from

"The Citroën C4 is a stylish car inside and out"



the engine helped tow uphill cleanly, both going forwards and in reverse.

Citroën dealers usually give healthy discounts, and the *What Car?* Target Price suggests there's plenty of fat to trim from the list price. Choosing the C4 means saving at the pumps, too - you can expect 67.3mpg, according to official figures.



The boot is large, but the backrests don't lie entirely flat when folded

We say...

Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★○○
Buying & owning	★★★★○

VERDICT ★★★★★
Stylish, distinctive and cheap to run, but not quite as stable as the best in this class.

Ford
Focus 2.0
TDCi Titanium

List price	£20,745
Target Price	£19,025
Kerbweight	1421kg
85% match	1208kg
Max towing weight	1500kg
Towball limit	75kg

THE FORD FOCUS versus VW Golf battle has gone down to the wire more than once since the Towcar Awards started in 2007. In fact, these two have shared the honours in the lightest weight class with no other models getting a look-in.

As a driver's car, the new Focus is hard to beat. The steering is smooth and accurate, the suspension keeps body movements in check, and the 2.0-litre diesel has more than enough muscle for any suitable match. The 30-60mph sprint took just 15.4 seconds, making the Focus one of the quickest cars in this class. The Ford stops well, too, needing just 10.8 metres to halt the outfit from 30mph.

Unlike many of the smaller cars on test, the handbrake held with no need to pull the handle clear of its mountings. The Focus took a fuss-free approach to steep slopes, both going forwards and in reverse.

Compared with the Golf, the ride is rather firm. The same applies



"The Focus took a fuss-free approach to steep slopes"

with or without a caravan in tow. There isn't quite as much passenger space as in the VW, either. These are small differences, but with two such good cars, small differences add up.

Our practicality judge was less impressed by the Focus, bemoaning the inadequate handbook and lack of a Trailer Stability Programme.



The dashboard may look dramatic but the controls are easy to use

We say...

Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★○○
Buying & owning	★★★★○

VERDICT ★★★★★
An excellent family hatchback, let down by a poor practicality score.

Skoda
Octavia 1.6 TDI CR
Greenline II 5dr

List price	£17,705
Target Price	£16,446
Kerbweight	1390kg
85% match	1182kg
Max towing weight	1400kg
Towball limit	75kg

LAST YEAR'S GREEN award-winner returns, this time as a hatchback. The latest Greenline II model is even more economical than before, achieving 74.3mpg according to official figures. It emits just 99g/km of CO₂, so there's no Vehicle Excise Duty to pay when buying. Expect a solid, stable tow from the Octavia. Few steering

corrections are needed, even on a windy day. However, the back of the car and caravan didn't always agree in the lane-change test.

It took plenty of revs to get through the hill start, but at least the handbrake held with no need for a bicep workout.

The cabin is spacious and the boot swallowed our holiday gear.

We say...

Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★○○
Buying & owning	★★★★○

VERDICT ★★★★★
Stable, roomy and extremely economical, but on the slow side.



Skoda
Yeti 1.6 TDI CR
Greenline II Elegance

List price	£20,185
Target Price	£19,022
Kerbweight	1410kg
85% match	1199kg
Max towing weight	1400kg
Towball limit	80kg

THERE WAS LITTLE to choose between the Skoda Yeti and the Octavia hatch. Both have the same engine, the kerbweights are only 20kg apart and both proved stable at motorway speeds. The Yeti managed all but one item from our typical holiday luggage load, but beat the Octavia with a higher noseweight limit.

A tyre repair kit is standard but Skoda says it's permissible to use the get-you-home gunk if you have a puncture while towing. Again, the same applies if you choose the Octavia.

However, in the lane-change test the Yeti was decisively better, stabilising quickly after each violent direction change.

We say...

Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★○○
Buying & owning	★★★★○

VERDICT ★★★★★
The pick of the Skodas in this weight division. An unflappable towcar.

Up to 1425kg