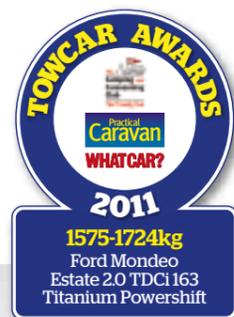


# 1575-1724kg

Mid-sized estates, 4x4s and MPVs are put through their paces as we test the best of the middleweights



**“Has plenty of muscle to cope with any suitable match”**

**CLASS WINNER**

**Ford**  
Mondeo Estate  
2.0 TDCi 163  
Titanium Powershift

<b>List price</b>	£25,550
<b>Target Price</b>	£23,349
<b>Kerbweight</b>	1592kg
<b>85% match</b>	1353kg
<b>Max towing weight</b>	2000kg
<b>Towball limit</b>	90kg

muscle to cope with any suitable match, as the 30-60mph time of 12.8 seconds shows.

Our test car matched this engine to the Powershift gearbox. From a driver's perspective, Powershift behaves like an automatic gearbox, although it uses clutches rather than an auto's torque converter for greater efficiency and improved economy. According to official figures you can

expect 50.4mpg on the combined cycle. We found Powershift to rival a good auto for smoothness.

The Mondeo stops as well as it goes. In the 30-0mph brake test it needed just 9.8 metres to come to a halt - one of the shortest stopping distances we recorded this year. Apart from a slight tendency to follow road contours, our driving judges were very satisfied with the

Mondeo's stability, right up to the legal limit and beyond.

Sharp and informative steering was a driver's ally in the lane-change test. However ragged the caravan became behind it, the Mondeo continued to go where it was pointed.

There's plenty of room in the cabin, and luggage space is cavernous. We'd like more comprehensive towing info in the handbook, however.



**It's easy to find your way around the Mondeo's uncluttered dash**



**The boot is so big you won't need to fold the rear seats too often**

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
A brilliant estate, as well as a swift and secure towcar.

YOU COULD ARGUE the Ford Mondeo didn't need its recent face-lift - it was still one of the best family cars around. But useful improvements have been made to the latest car, not least the 161bhp engine. This version of the 2.0 TDCi combines plentiful punch with strong economy and low emissions. With 251lb.ft of torque, there's plenty of

**Top used car 1575-1724kg**

**Mercedes-Benz**  
C220 CDI Estate Sport auto

<b>12 months old</b>	£24,795 (approx)
<b>36 months old</b>	£19,645 (approx)

A used Mercedes C220 CDI Estate isn't cheap. After three years on the road don't expect much change from £20,000. However, if you want a

quick car that mixes practicality with style, it's well worth a look. When this C-Class was assessed for the 2008 Towcar Awards it was one of the quickest cars tested, pulling a caravan from 30-60mph in 12.7 seconds. In a straight line the Merc proved stable as well as swift, though the back of the car was pulled around by the tourer in the lane-change test. The C-Class mastered the hill start with ease.

A few years back Mercedes went through a bad patch for quality and reliability, but signs are those times are gone. The C-Class finished second compact exec in the 2011 JD Power Customer Satisfaction Survey behind the Lexus IS, and 11th overall, so you can buy a used C220 CDI with confidence. Make sure you look at a few examples before parting with your cash.

**Ssangyong**  
Korando 2.0  
diesel 2WD

<b>List price (est)</b>	£16,995
<b>Target Price</b>	TBC
<b>Kerbweight</b>	1591kg
<b>85% match</b>	1352kg
<b>Max towing weight</b>	2000kg
<b>Towball limit</b>	80kg

UNTIL NOW SSANGYONG has offered big cars with little price tags, but too many rough edges. The Korando promises the same value but with fewer compromises. If this two-wheel-drive model is anything to go by Ssangyong is part-way there.

The steering has an over-strong self-centring action and the engine is noisy, but otherwise the Korando makes a decent towcar. Straight-line stability stands comparison with many more expensive cars, and the 30-60mph time of 13.1 seconds shows that while the engine may be noisy, it's not short of pulling power. The 30-0mph stopping distance of 10.8 metres is on the money, too.

Pushed hard through the lane-change test the Korando was less assured, as the stability control cut in suddenly at high speeds whenever the outfit got out of shape.



**“The engine may be noisy but it's not short of power”**

It's a mixed picture inside the cabin. There's plenty of space but the finish still feels downmarket.

There's 486 litres of luggage space - not quite enough for every item in our test load of holiday luggage but not far off. The handbook has useful information on towing, and we're pleased the Korando has a full-sized spare.



**The finish is a little rough and ready, but there's plenty of space**

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
Probably Ssangyong's best towcar to date, but still short of the best in this class.

**Peugeot**  
5008 HDi 163  
Exclusive auto

<b>List price</b>	£25,110
<b>Target Price</b>	£23,003
<b>Kerbweight</b>	1589kg
<b>85% match</b>	1351kg
<b>Max towing weight</b>	1500kg
<b>Towball limit</b>	70kg

in just 10.2 metres. The electronic parking brake makes starting and stopping on a steep hill less nervy, holding the outfit steady at the touch of a button. The 5008 pulled up the slope in first gear and reverse without complaint.

With the back seats folded our holiday luggage fitted in, but the towing electrics are hard to get at.

THE PEUGEOT 5008 is one of our favourite seven-seat MPVs. The combination of powerful diesel engine and smooth-shifting auto gearbox adds to the car's appeal. It's the same engine used by the class-winning Ford Mondeo, and performance is similar, pulling from 30-60mph in 14.2 seconds. Strong brakes stop the outfit from 30mph

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
A refined, comfortable seven-seater and an accomplished towcar.



**Skoda**  
Superb Estate 2.0 TDI  
CR 170 SE

<b>List price</b>	£23,265
<b>Target Price</b>	£21,848
<b>Kerbweight</b>	1577kg
<b>85% match</b>	1340kg
<b>Max towing weight</b>	1800kg
<b>Towball limit</b>	80kg

the outfit on the 1-in-6 test hill, although there was no problem driving uphill in first gear or reverse.

The Superb performed well, hauling the caravan from 30-60mph in just 12.3 seconds. Although stable, it didn't quite match the Mondeo in the lane-change test, and isn't quite as solid at speeds over 60mph.

LAST YEAR'S CLASS winner was still on the shortlist when the judges debated this year's result. The huge cabin is the Skoda's stand-out feature. There's more passenger space than in the Ford Mondeo, and we loaded all our holiday gear with space to spare. However, it took a very firm pull before the handbrake would hold

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
Still one of the best cars in this class, but just loses out to the Mondeo.



**Subaru**  
Outback 2.0D SE

List price	£28,070
Target Price	£26,267
Kerbweight	1647kg
85% match	1400kg
Max towing weight	1700kg
Towball limit	82kg

ESTATE CARS WITH four-wheel drive may be niche products, but it's a niche worth exploring if you tour all year round.

The Subaru Outback is a sound choice, albeit rather a pricey one. There's plenty of passenger room, and 526 litres of luggage space with the back seats upright. We found space for most, but not all, of our holiday luggage.

Soft suspension offers a comfortable ride, but it does the Subaru no favours in the lane-change test. The van pulled the car off course at speeds that the best cars in this class coped with easily.

The electronic parking brake held the outfit on the 1-in-6 slope, but rather a lot of revs and clutch slip were needed to climb the hill.

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
A solid towcar for four-season caravanners, but expensive to buy.



**Mercedes-Benz**  
C250 CDI  
Blueefficiency  
Sport Estate auto

List price	£34,720
Target Price	£32,516
Kerbweight	1675kg
85% match	1424kg
Max towing weight	1800kg
Towball limit	100kg

THE MERCEDES C250 CDI is quick, even with a tonne-and-a-half of tourer to haul. It took just 10.2 seconds to go from 30-60mph. The brakes are just as strong, stopping the outfit from 30mph in 10.2 metres on a damp track.

Power counts for little without control, but the C-Class was stable

at speed, with little movement recorded by the AL-KO ATC sensors. However, in the lane-change test on faster runs the driver felt the 'van pull at the back of the car.

The hill start was straightforward, whether forwards or backwards. Our practicality judge couldn't find room for all our luggage, but was impressed by the handbook.

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
A quick and stable towcar, but not the roomiest estate car.



**Mitsubishi**  
ASX 1.8 MIVEC 3 4WD

List price	£22,484
Target Price	£21,704
Kerbweight	1600kg
85% match	1360kg
Max towing weight	1400kg
Towball limit	70kg

THE MITSUBISHI ASX is a solid enough effort, but isn't special enough to challenge the best cars in this class.

The ASX earns middling scores pretty much across the board. The 1.8-litre diesel has 221lb.ft of torque - enough muscle to pull car and caravan from 30-60mph in 16.8 seconds - and happily pulled up to 70mph. There is an intrusive whistle from the turbo at times, though.

Better-controlled suspension would make the ASX a more relaxing car to tow with. The lack of finesse was noticeable in the lane-change test, although the ASX was untidy rather than ragged.

The handbrake struggled to hold the outfit on a 1-in-6 slope. It took a really firm pull to stop car and caravan slowly sliding backwards. The ASX pulled up the slope cleanly enough in first gear, although some judges found the clutch began to whiff after reversing up the hill.



**"The Mitsubishi happily pulled up to 70mph"**

Driven solo, the ASX puts the emphasis on comfort rather than alert handling. Keen drivers should look elsewhere. There's enough head- and legroom, front and rear, and luggage space is reasonable. Our practicality judge found room for most, but not all, of our holiday luggage, and also noted the towing electrics were fiddly to connect.



There's enough space inside the ASX but the finish could be better

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
A solid effort - but there are better towcars for similar money.

**Peugeot**  
508 SW 2.0  
HdI 140 Allure

List price	£24,325
Target Price	£23,676
Kerbweight	1681kg
85% match	1429kg
Max towing weight	1790kg
Towball limit	75kg

THE PEUGEOT 508 SW is one of the best family estate cars. It's a capable towcar, too. The 2.0 HdI engine musters 240lb.ft of torque - enough for determined acceleration, even when towing. The 30-60mph sprint took 16.6 seconds.

If you need to stop in a hurry, the brakes are reassuring. Car and caravan came to a halt in just 10.5 metres, and felt stable. The same could be said of the 508 in the lane-change test. Although the caravan moved around behind it, the Peugeot wasn't pulled off course.

Relatively firm suspension means bad road surfaces are felt more than if you are driving, say, a Volkswagen Passat, but the Peugeot is far from uncomfortable. Anyone riding in the back will find there's less legroom than in a Passat or Ford Mondeo, but only tall passengers will complain. There's plenty of room for your feet if you're sitting in the middle.



**"One of the best family estate cars and a capable towcar"**

Our practicality judge was pleased to find room for all our holiday luggage in the 512-litre boot. Folding the back seats ups the capacity to 1,598 litres - not as big as some, but enough for most needs.

The £24,325 price is competitive. Because the 508 SW is new to the market, haggling probably won't save more than a few hundred pounds.



You won't go short of luggage space if you choose a 508 SW

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
Stylish and stable, although many rivals offer more passenger and luggage space.

**Volvo**  
S60 D5 SE Lux  
Premium Geartronic

List price	£33,410
Target Price	£30,660
Kerbweight	1702kg
85% match	1447kg
Max towing weight	1800kg
Towball limit	90kg

JUDGED PURELY ON its towing ability, the Volvo S60 was close to the top of most judges' score sheets.

The S60 is as stable as they come. The AL-KO ATC sensors recorded almost no movement from the 'van, even when slowing from 70mph. Through the lane-change the Volvo refused to be bullied by the tourer, although the stability control did kick in earlier than with many rivals.

It's a quick car, too. Driven solo, the engine's 309lb.ft of torque makes short work of any overtaking opportunity. Even towing, you won't be stuck behind slower traffic for long. Be prepared to turn up the stereo, though, as the engine is gruff and noisy when worked hard.

That's a shame, because otherwise the Volvo is a quiet enough car for long drives. It's comfortable, too. The driving position is sound and there's

**"The Volvo S60 is as stable as they come"**



enough space for tall drivers to stretch out. Rear-seat space is comparable with the Mercedes C-Class.

The boot didn't have space for all our holiday luggage. Our practicality judge was also disappointed that the towing electrics were fiddly to access. However, the Volvo scored well for having a Towing Stability Programme.



Volvo knows how to make an attractive and comfortable cabin

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★★★★★  
Great power and composure, although the boot is very small.

1575-1724kg

Partner Tepee 1.6 HDi  
112 FAP Outdoor

<b>List price</b>	£16,700
<b>Target Price</b>	£14,747
<b>Kerbweight</b>	1699kg
<b>85% match</b>	Not legal
<b>Max towing weight</b>	1300kg
<b>Towball limit</b>	70kg

THE PEUGEOT STARTS off at a disadvantage because of its low towing limit. A maximum of 1300kg is well below the 85% match figure, and rules out many family caravans.

That's disappointing, because otherwise the Peugeot has many positive points. One judge described it as "supremely practical". The tall body provides great headroom, and there's plenty of storage space dotted around the cabin. The boot is huge, swallowing our holiday luggage with ease. We're also pleased that it comes with a full-size spare wheel.

The van-like appearance might not promise much fun for the driver, but the Partner Tepee is surprisingly good to drive, so long as you're not in a rush - foot on the floor, it needed 21.7 seconds to go from 30-60mph with a 'van in tow.

Along with more poke, better brakes would also be welcome.



**"The Partner Tepee is surprisingly good to drive"**

The stopping distance of 11.3 metres is mediocre on a dry track. In the lane-change test, the 'van was soon swaying around behind the Peugeot, but it was only at high speeds that the back of the car was pulled off-line.

The HDi 112 Outdoor isn't cheap, but it is the top-spec model. Generous discounts knock about £2,000 off the asking price.



**The Peugeot's roomy cabin is one of the Partner Tepee's strengths**

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★ ★ ★ ○ ○ ○  
A practical and spacious car hampered by a restrictive towing limit.

**Volvo**  
V60 D3 SE  
Lux Premium

<b>List price</b>	£30,715
<b>Target Price</b>	£28,366
<b>Kerbweight</b>	1722kg
<b>85% match</b>	1464kg
<b>Max towing weight</b>	1600kg
<b>Towball limit</b>	75kg

YOU MIGHT EXPECT a Volvo estate to be one of the most practical cars in this year's tests, but the V60 places style before practicality. It took all our holiday luggage, but only after some very careful packing when most mid-sized estates had room to spare.

Compared with the D5 saloon, the D3 has noticeably less muscle - it took around 15.6 seconds to pull car and caravan from 30-60mph. Strong brakes stopped car and caravan in 10.7 metres from 30mph.

Through the lane-change test the V60 put in a textbook performance, without any aggressive intervention from the stability control system. In strong crosswinds the Volvo moved around a little at 60mph and needed some steering corrections, but on less windy days it felt secure and steady.

The electronic parking brake held the outfit steady on the 1-in-6



**"The Volvo V60 places style before practicality"**

test hill. Although the Volvo pulled up the hill without fuss in first gear, it was a little laboured in reverse and the clutch did smell afterwards.

The list price of this version stays just that side of £30,000, although it should be possible to persuade Volvo dealers to knock about £2,000 from the price.



**The V60's cabin is stylish and well made, but not the most spacious**

**We say...**

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

**VERDICT** ★ ★ ★ ★ ○ ○  
Impactical for an estate car, but the V60 looks great and tows well.

1575-1724kg