

1725-1899kg class winner

There's some serious competition for the top spot in this category, but the Jaguar XF outclasses several tough rivals to take the honours



The XF may be a saloon, but its boot is big. The cabin is comfortable and the Jaguar tows a caravan superbly



Jaguar XF

2.2D Premium Luxury

List price	£37,205
Target Price	£33,810
Kerbweight	1745kg
85% match	1483kg
Towing limit	1850kg
Towball limit	75kg

AN EXECUTIVE SALOON isn't the most obvious choice as a towcar. Perhaps you were expecting a big estate to win this class, or maybe a 4x4. In truth, so were we.

The XF challenged our preconceptions. With its superbly judged suspension, low centre of gravity and inch-perfect steering, it made the lane-change test seem easy. Stroll up to 70mph and there's no sign that car or caravan is beginning to wander, and data from the AI-Ko ATC system shows how composed the Jag is when slowing from high speeds. You could tow all day with this car and never experience a nervous moment.

The hill start is usually best suited to 4x4s, but the Jaguar matched its SUV rivals. Its 2.2-litre engine might not have as much muscle as the XF 3.0-litre, but it's more than strong enough to manage a 1-in-6 slope.

For a saloon to cope with every item but one from our typical holiday luggage load is impressive, and the inclusion of a trailer stability program earned further marks from our practicality judges.

We say...	
Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★○
Buying & owning	★★★★○
Verdict	★★★★★

A brilliant towcar and a fine sports saloon. Very impressive indeed.



Did you know...

8 cars tested in 2012 promise over 60mpg on the combined cycle

Top used car 1725-1899kg

Nissan X-Trail 2.0 dCi 173 Tekna
12 months old £22,285 (approx)
36 months old £16,485 (approx)

With a kerbweight of 1735kg, the Nissan X-Trail 2.0 dCi 173 Tekna is a good choice for anyone with a mid-size family tourer to tow. The Nissan makes a stable tug however grim the weather gets. What's more, its diesel engine has stacks of low-down pull. When we tested the X-Trail last year, car and caravan pulled from 30-60mph in 13.4 seconds. It coped manfully with the hill-start test in first gear and reverse. The X-Trail is a practical choice, too, with plenty of space to take on a family's holiday luggage. Official combined economy of 44.1mpg is respectable for a car of this size, weight and performance.

9 more cars in this category reviewed on the next pages

1725-1899kg the best of the rest

BMW 520d

M Sport Touring Auto	
List price	£37,250
Target Price	£34,290
Kerbweight	1790kg
85% match	1522kg
Towing limit	2000kg
Towball limit	90kg

LAST YEAR'S CLASS winner very nearly did it again. It remains one of the best towcars on sale. It may not be the biggest estate (take a look at the Mercedes E-Class if you empty your house for a fortnight away), but only one item of holiday luggage wouldn't fit. The 5 picked up more marks from the practicality team for its trailer stability program and self-levelling suspension. The BMW did more than tick the right boxes. It was absolutely



“The 5 may not be cheap to buy, but it’s surprisingly affordable to run”



The 5's dash is clear and it's easy to find a comfy driving position

unflustered at high speed, and barely broke a sweat in the lane-change test. The hill start was also straightforward, whether going forwards or in reverse. While the 5 may not be cheap to buy, it is surprisingly affordable to run; 55.4mpg is very impressive for such a quick car, and carbon dioxide emissions of 133g/km keep VED bills low.

Resale values are strong, so you'll get back much of what you paid a few years down the road.

We say...	
Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★★○
Buying & owning	★★★★○
Verdict	★★★★★
Still a superb towcar, and not as costly to run as you might think.	

Range Rover Evoque

SD4 Prestige Auto	
List price	£39,995
Target Price	£39,995
Kerbweight	1760kg
85% match	1496kg
Towing limit	1800kg
Towball limit	150kg

IF THERE WERE a prize for most stylish towcar, the Evoque would be at the top of the shortlist. Get beneath the glitzy image, though, and it is a very able towcar. You can't argue with a 30-60mph time of 13.5 seconds. The Al-Ko ATC sensors confirm the Range Rover's

stability at speed, with very little movement from the caravan. The Evoque slows down with reassuring authority, too. The hill start was trouble-free, thanks to the electronic parking brake, plenty of pulling power and four-wheel drive. Reversing up a slope felt just as easy.

The Evoque may be expensive for a 4x4 of this size, but it goes some way to justifying its price with lots of standard equipment and an exceptional resale value. However, luggage space is quite tight. Several items from our typical caravanner's holiday load wouldn't fit. The reversing camera is useful, but didn't offer a very clear view of the towball.

We say...	
Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★○○
Buying & owning	★★★★○
Verdict	★★★★★
Tows beautifully, although you can buy bigger and more practical cars.	



The fashion show continues on the inside, with a luxury feel



BMW X3

xDrive 20d M Sport Auto	
List price	£35,705
Target Price	£34,042
Kerbweight	1800kg
85% match	1530kg
Towing limit	2400kg
Towball limit	100kg



THE BMW X3 is a very fine towcar, but every driver preferred the 5 Series Touring. At a steady 60mph the X3 was stable, but it felt less comfortable when pushed up to 70mph. Crosswinds that the 5 Touring shrugged off had a more noticeable effect when we towed with the X3. In the emergency lane-change test the BMW stayed on course, and the hill start caused no problems going forwards or in reverse. Unhitch the van and the X3 comes alive, with strong performance and agile handling. There's plenty of space inside for passengers and luggage. Only one item from our typical load wouldn't squeeze in. The BMW earned more points with our practicality judges for its trailer stability program.



The controls are easy to use, but the driver's seat is rather narrow

We say...	
Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★○
Buying & owning	★★★★★
Verdict	★★★★○
A brilliant 4x4, but there are better towcars in this talented class.	

Mercedes-Benz E220

CDI Blue Efficiency Avantgarde	
Estate Auto	
List price	£36,090
Target Price	£33,195
Kerbweight	1845kg
85% match	1568kg
Towing limit	2100kg
Towball limit	84kg

THE LOAD SPACE in the Mercedes-Benz E-Class Estate is simply huge. With five seats upright, there are 695 litres to fill – easily enough to cope with our typical load of holiday luggage. Lower the seats and you get a massive 1950 litres. As a load carrier, the E-Class comfortably beats the BMW 5 Series Touring, but it's not quite



the BMW's match as a towcar. In the lane-change test, the back of the car was dragged off line by the caravan on high-speed runs, and it needed some steering correction at 60mph in windy conditions. The footbrake needed a firm push to be sure it would hold car

and caravan on the 1-in-6 slope. Otherwise the Mercedes breezed through the hill-start test. The E-Class is pricey, but strong resale values make it a sound buy. Even the auto version promises 53.3mpg on the combined cycle, which should ease running costs.

We say...	
Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★★○
Buying & owning	★★★★○
Verdict	★★★★○
A great load carrier and a solid tug, but weak in the lane-change test.	

Mercedes-Benz C350

CDI Blue Efficiency Sport Estate Auto	
List price	£37,535
Target Price	£34,119
Kerbweight	1760kg
85% match	1496kg
Towing limit	1800kg
Towball limit	75kg

THE C-CLASS may be fast and practical, but several judges had nervous moments towing above 60mph, as data from the Al-Ko ATC sensors showed. It wasn't as secure at high speeds as we've come to expect of a Mercedes. Like its big brother, the E-Class, the C350 CDI struggled with the emergency lane-change, too. It was more impressive stopping from 30mph in just 11.1m. With 457lb.ft of torque, it took a mere 8.4 seconds to go from 30-60mph.

The footbrake needed a really hard shove before it would stop car and caravan from rolling backwards on the test hill, but once under way, the Merc pulled effortlessly to the top of the slope. Without a van to tow, the C-Class feels exceptionally quick, but it should still achieve 47.1mpg, according to official figures. Sport versions like our test car have a firm suspension to give composed cornering. However, the ride is too stiff, especially around town. Our practicality testers couldn't find room for all the luggage, which is disappointing for an estate car.

We say...	
Towing	★★★★○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★★○
Buying & owning	★★★★○
Verdict	★★★★○
Fine performance and handling, but not as stable as the best in its class.	



“Once under way, the Merc pulled effortlessly to the top”

Ford Galaxy

1.6T Ecoboost (Start/Stop) Titanium X	
List price	£29,355
Target Price	£27,225
Kerbweight	1734kg
85% match	1474kg
Towing limit	1600kg
Towball limit	90kg

THE FORD GALAXY 1.6 Ecoboost is very nearly a fine towcar. It's let down badly by its performance in the hill-start test. The handbrake had to be yanked on before it would hold, and the turbocharged petrol engine struggled to get car and caravan to the top of the hill. The clutch stank in protest. Once under way the Galaxy accelerates surprisingly well, and

stability at high speeds and in the lane-change is very impressive. With seats six and seven folded away, the Galaxy has plenty of luggage space. What's more, our practicality team was pleased to see the puncture-repair kit under the footwell rather than buried beneath the boot where it's harder to access. The diesel version we tested in the past is a better towcar.

We say...	
Towing	★★★○○
Solo	★★★★○
Practicality	★★★★○
Buying & owning	★★★★○
Verdict	★★★○○
The Galaxy looked like a contender, until we tried a hill start...	



1725-1899kg **the best of the rest**

Chevrolet Captiva

2.2 VCDi LT 7st

List price	£28,285
Target Price	£23,995
Kerbweight	1878kg
85% match	1596kg
Towing limit	2000kg
Towball limit	80kg

ON PAPER, THE recently facelifted Chevrolet Captiva has plenty of power, and the 30-60mph time of 16.9 seconds is respectable. However, high gear ratios blunt the Chevy's acceleration. What's more, the clutch was smelly after tackling the test hill.

Soft suspension allowed some movement when towing at speed,

but not so much that the Captiva would become tiring during a long drive. However, in the emergency lane-change test the car was dragged off course on high-speed runs.

With all seven seats in place, there is little room for holiday luggage, but with the third row folded away all but one item of holiday luggage went into the boot. It's good to see a trailer stability program and self-leveling suspension fitted as standard equipment.

We say...

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

Big, practical, but it's not as quick as it should be. Resale values are poor.

SsangYong Korando

EX Auto

List price	£22,995
Target Price	£22,168
Kerbweight	1747kg
85% match	1485kg
Towing limit	2000kg
Towball limit	80kg

LET'S GET THE bad stuff out of the way first: the Korando's steering is numb, the engine is noisy and it feels flat at low revs. The interior finish betrays the car's budget price tag.

If you can live with these faults, however, there are several compensations. The SsangYong's high-speed stability is reassuring, all the way to 70mph. The brakes are strong, too, and the Korando's performance in the lane-change



test was respectable until the final high-speed run.

The cabin may look cheap but it's spacious, with more rear head- and legroom than in many rivals. Luggage capacity is OK, but not enough for all our kit. There's no trailer stability program.

We say...

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

Not a polished drive, but stable at speed, roomy and inexpensive.

Honda Accord Tourer

2.2i DTEC EX Auto

List price	£30,695
Target Price	£28,572
Kerbweight	1778kg
85% match	Not legal
Towing limit	1100kg
Towball limit	75kg

THE HONDA ACCORD Tourer would make a good towcar – with a manual gearbox. The automatic Honda supplied for testing has a legal towing limit of just 1100kg. That's hopeless for a car of this size and weight, and 600kg less than the manual can pull.

Unsurprisingly with a small caravan behind it, the Accord had no trouble towing up to 70mph,

and proved stable in a straight line. It mastered the lane-change, too, holding its course however much the van slid behind it.

The Honda couldn't quite cope with all our holiday luggage, but we're pleased that a trailer stability program is standard.

We say...

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

A potentially strong towcar that's hampered by a sorry towing limit.



Test Figures

Jaguar XF

2.2D Premium Luxury

30-60mph

12.2 seconds

30-0mph

11.3m

30-60mph

12.9 seconds

30-0mph

11.6m

30-60mph

13.5 seconds

30-0mph

10.6m

30-60mph

13.5 seconds

30-0mph

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