1900kg & above

The true heavyweights of the towing world battle it out, as 4x4s take on an MPV, a saloon and an estate



Land Rover

Discovery 3.0 SDV6 XS

D1300 VC1 y 3.0 C	
List price	£43,385
Target Price	£41,366
Kerbweight	2583kg
85% match	2196kg
Max towing weight	3500kg
Towball limit	150kg

LAST YEAR'S OVERALL champion easily retains its class crown. It's going to take a really exceptional car to beat it.

First and foremost, the Land Rover Discovery is a tremendous car for towing. It takes just 12 seconds to pull a big twin-axle from 30-60mph. If anything, it feels quicker than the raw numbers suggest. There's rarely any need to put your foot to the floor, such are

Sorento 2.5 CRDi XS

Kia

24 months old

Top used car 1900kg & above

£14,455 (approx)

£10,560 (approx)

If you're in the market for a cut-price heavweight,

it's hard to look beyond a used Kia Sorento. With

a kerbweight of over two tonnes, there are few

the reserves the 3.0 SDV6 engine has to call upon.

An outfit with a total weight the wrong side of four tonnes takes some stopping, but the Discovery's brakes get the job done in just 10.6 metres. In spite of being so powerful, they're also easy to apply smoothly.

Its high-speed stability is the equal of any car here. Line up the



tourers that won't make suitable matches. Choose

2.5-litre engine has the power to cope with pulling

hefty 'vans. Earlier cars aren't as strong, although

there's enough poke if you work the engine hard.

suspension. This was standard before the revamp

but dropped on to the options list afterwards and

It's worth finding a car with self-levelling

a Sorento built after the 2006 face-lift, and the

view of the road than the Discovery and luggage space is huge

outfit on a straight road and you could almost drive it blindfolded. In the lane-change test the Discovery does lean a little, and on fast runs the caravan could be felt pulling at the back of the car. It never seemed as if the Land Rover was about to

get out of shape, though.

The 1-in-6 test hill might as well have been a speed bump for all the challenge it posed. The electronic

Few cars give a more commanding Fold away the third row of seats

parking brake stopped car and 'van from rolling backwards, then the mighty engine and smooth-shifting auto did the rest.

Reversing up the hill? Just as easy as going forwards.

The cabin is vast, with ample space for seven. There's also a big boot, a Trailer Stability System and self-levelling suspension. What more could you possibly want?

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FRDICT If you have the means, the Discovery remains an exceptionally good towcar.

makes a big difference to the way the Sorento tows. The standard suspension isn't controlled enough, allowing the caravan to boss the car around in the lane-change test back in 2007.

Still, you can forgive a few rough edges when you consider how cheap the Sorento is. A four-year-old car costs no more than a new supermini, and should give many years of reliable towing.

Saab

9-5 2.0 TTiD Vector SF

List price	£29,110
Target Price	£28,547
Kerbweight	1910kg
85% match	1624kg
Max towing weight	1800kg
Towball limit	85kg

IT'S NO SECRET that Saab has been through some tough times recently. The 9-5 is the company's first new model in years. Judged purely as a towcar it has many strengths, but it's too far off the mark in other areas.

Let's start with the positives. Performance is very strong. With 295lb.ft of torque to call upon, the engine pulls car and caravan from 30-60mph in just 12.3 seconds.

On straight stretches of test track the 9-5 proved stable, holding a steady course up to 60mph and beyond. Deliberately sharp steering inputs failed to put the Saab off its stride.

The automatic parking brake did its iob without fuss, and the powerful engine also made hill starts straightforward in first gear and reverse.

It may be a saloon, but the boot is like a cave. We had space to spare for all our luggage. There's plenty of room in the cabin too

Bad points? Well, that engine may be powerful but it's noisy, too.



What's more, the jiggly ride can become irritating, with or without a tourer in tow. Although it corners tidily, the steering gives the driver little idea of what's going on with the front tyres.

We hope the good times are on the way back for Saah, and with them, cars that are closer to the top of the class than this one.



The Saab's dashboard is far too cluttered and confusing

We say	
Towing	***
Solo	⊛⊛○○
Practicality	⊛⊛⊙
Buying & owning	€€00

VERDICT Tows well enough, but some way behind the best execs for ride comfort.

Land Rover

Freelander 2.2

SD4 HSE

List price	£36,260
Target Price	£33,522
Kerbweight	1915kg
85% match	1628kg
Max towing weight	2000kg
Towball limit	150kg

LAND ROVER HAS introduced a more powerful engine at the top of its range. The company tells us that its published kerbweight is for a completely empty car, so 1915kg is the correct kerbweight by the current EU definition.

The beefier engine, which powers all wheels via a smooth automatic gearbox, really makes a difference.

The Freelander took only 13.1 seconds to go from 30-60mph. It needed just 10.7 metres to stop from 30mph. Through the lane-change test the Land Rover stayed firmly in charge of the 'van.

We couldn't fit all our luggage in the boot, but the high noseweight limit and accessible towball and electrics won points.

Towing	***
Solo	€€€
Practicality	***
Buying & owning	
VERDICT	***





Mercedes-Benz E350 CDI Blueefficiency Avantgarde Estate

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List price	£39,40
Target Price	£36,375
Kerbweight	1925kg
85% match	1636kg
Max towing weight	2100kg
Towball limit	84kg

YOU GET LOADS of space, power and ability with the Mercedes E-Class Estate. The Blueefficiency name means the engine isn't just powerful, its emissions are low. too. So while there's 457lb.ft of torque to call on, expect 44.1mpg, according to official figures. Hitching up a 'van barely seems to

slow the E-Class as it breezes from 30-60mph in just 9.1 seconds.

Testers had no complaints about stability up to the legal limit, but one or two needed to make steering corrections at higher speeds

There are 690 litres of luggage space with the seats upright. Our practicality judge found good towing info in the handbook.

we say	
Towing	

 \bigcirc **Buying & owning**

VERDICT

⊕⊕⊕⊕ A brilliant car to tow with, and a supremely practical load-hauler.

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Hyundai

Santa Fe 2.2 CRDi Style 7st

List price	£23,640
Target Price	£22,473
Kerbweight	1961kg
85% match	1667kg
Max towing weight	2500kg
Towball limit	100kg

NEED A BIG 4x4 but don't want to pay big money? The Hyundai Santa Fe is the car. It doesn't tow quite as well as a Land Rover Discovery or Mercedes E-Class, but it's still competent.

It coped well enough in the lane-change test up to the final high-speed run, when it took some effort to keep it under control.

Crosswinds affected the Santa Fe more than the best towcars in this class. The stopping distance from 30mph was longer than the class leader's. However, the big Hyundai coped well with the hill-start test.

Which other car offers seven seats, a lot of standard equipment and the power to pull heavy twin-axle 'vans, all for £23,000?

We say	
Towing	*** ○
Solo	
Practicality	
Buying & owning	
VEDDICT	

Not as polished as the best, but it

costs half as much. Superb value.

THE MERCEDES M-CLASS has

The 3.0-litre diesel is so powerful you'll wonder why anyone would choose a thirsty V8 model, sprinting from 30-60mph in 10 seconds. The M-Class is as stable as it is quick, staying firmly in control



Mercedes-Benz ML350 CDI **Grand Edition**

List price	£51,970
Target Price	£47,971
Kerbweight	2185kg
85% match	1857kg
Max towing weight	3500kg
Towball limit	140kg

recently had a mid-life revamp, which has kept Merc's big 4x4 competitive with newer rivals.

of the caravan in the lane-change test. At motorway speeds and beyond nothing shifts it.

Inside, there are just five seats - a shame when most big 4x4s offer seven. However, there's plenty of head- and legroom, and space for all our holiday luggage.

There's no getting away from the high price, though.

We say	
Towing	***
Solo	***
Practicality	* * * * * * *
Buying & owning	
VERDICT	***
Hugely expensive, bu stable and highly des	-

Mitsubishi

Shogun 3.2 DI-DC LWB Elegance auto

List price	£37,634
Target Price	£35,322
Kerbweight	2300kg
85% match	1955kg
Max towing weight	3500kg
Towball limit	135kg

MITSUBISHI'S OLD-SCHOOL 4X4 has had a new-school makeover, with better fuel economy and reduced emissions. Is that enough to keep the Shogun competitive with more modern designs?

Judged by the amount of metal for your money, then yes. The over two-tonne kerbweight means there's no tourer the Shogun couldn't realistically tow. There's space for seven inside, although nothing like as much legroom in the third row as you get in the Land Rover Discovery.

Stow the rear seats and the boot is huge, easily coping with a typical load of holiday luggage. Our practicality judge was also pleased that towing data was easy to find in the handbook, and that the car comes with a full-size spare. However, since the spare wheel is carried on the back of the car the towball needs to be unusually long. This did the Shogun no favours in the lane-change test, allowing the caravan too much leverage on the



rear of the car, pushing the back of it wide even on low-speed runs.

The Shogun was happier towing in a straight line, although not in the same league as the Discovery or Merc ML. Accelerate hard and the 3.2-litre engine pulls car and 'van from 30-60mph in 16.5 seconds, but it's noisy. The Shogun is improved, but there are better heavyweight towcars.



As a five-seater, the Shogun has all the luggage space you might want

We say	
Towing	***
Solo	���○(
Practicality	����
Buying & owning	***

VERDICT Big, spacious and well equipped, but a poor performer in the lane-change test.

Volkswagen

Touareg 3.0 V6 TDI Escape

List price	£41,535
Target Price	£38,295
Kerbweight	2179kg
85% match	1852kg
Max towing weight	3500kg
Towball limit	140kg

VOLKSWAGEN PULLS NO punches with the new Touareg. It's one of the best big 4x4s for towcar drivers.

The Touareg's biggest fault in some eyes will be the absence of a third row of seats, even as an option. However, if five seats are enough, no passenger goes short of space. Some might feel the cabin isn't special enough on a car that costs more than £40,000, but you do get plenty of toys included in the price.

The best plaything of the lot is the 3.0-litre diesel engine. With 237bhp and 406lb.ft of torque it drags the Touareg and a caravan from 30-60mph in just 9.8 seconds. It's refined as well as powerful.

With its electronic parking brake, there's no danger of rolling backwards on a steep slope, and the V6 easily pulled car and 'van to the top of the test hill.

At high speeds the Touareg is stable and assured, with the AL-KO ATC sensors recording very little



"One of the best big 4x4s for towcar drivers"

movement. In the lane-change test the VW was well on top of things, right up until the final high-speed run, when the back of the car was pulled out of line.

The official combined economy figure of 37.2mpg is impressive, and you can expect the car to hold on to 48% of the original price after



West Control	
The controls are easy to use	-
other 4x4s feel more special	inside

We say	
Towing	€€€€
Solo	$\textcircled{*}\textcircled{*}\textcircled{*}\textcircled{*}\textcircled{*}\bigcirc$
Practicality	
Buying & owning	
VERDICT	***
The Touareg is one of th	e best large 4x4s,

with impressive economy for its size.

Audi Q7 3.0 TFSI Quattro List price £42,160 **Target Price** £38,631 Kerbweight 2240kg

1904ka

3500kg

85% match

Max towing weight

Towhall limit 140kg PETROL-POWERED 4X4S usually have diabolical fuel economy and steep depreciation. Is the Audi Q7

3.0 TFSI any different? Official figures promise 26.4mpg, which is still a lot thirstier than a diesel, but not as bad as you might expect of a 268bhp petrol 4x4. It should hold on to 39% of the original price after three years - 6% less than the equivalent diesel.

You get stunning performance, though. The Q7 can go from town speeds to the motorway limit in 8.6 seconds. Stability is excellent, both at speed and when driven hard in the lane-change test.

Our practicality judge was pleased to see a Trailer Stability System and self-levelling suspension fitted to the Audi.

Towing	$\otimes \otimes \otimes \otimes \otimes$
Solo	����○
Practicality	***
Buying & owning	●●●○○
VERDICT	***





Kia Sedona 2.2 CRDi 3 auto

List price	£26,580
Target Price	£24,496
Kerbweight	2287kg
85% match	1944kg
Max towing weight	2000kg
Towball limit	85kg

IT MAY NOT be the cleverest MPV, but the Sedona is big, heavy and tows well. With 322lb.ft to call on, the Kia comfortably pulls hefty 'vans. Accelerating from 30-60mph took just 15.3 seconds. The brakes are strong, too, needing just 10.6 metres to stop from 30mph. When really pushed in the lane-change test, the back of the car started to

be shoved around by the 'van, but the Sedona kept the upper hand. In dry weather, it coped well

with the hill start on a 1-in-6 slope. However, in the wet it was very easy to spin the front wheels.

The Sedona comes with a full-sized spare, but we couldn't quite find room for all our luggage, and the noseweight limit is low.

We say
Towing
Solo
Practicality
Buying & owning

€€€○ €€€€ VERDICT

Not the most polished MPV, but the Sedona tows well and is good value.

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