

Up to 1424kg class winner

You don't need a heavy car to go towing, as the best cars in the lightest weight class show. Our tests reveal the finest small towcars available



The Golf offers reasonable boot space, and the dashboard is neatly laid out. It's a stable towcar at speed



Volkswagen Golf

2.0 TDI 140 Match 5dr	
List price	£21,245
Target Price	£19,549
Kerbweight	1381kg
85% match	1174kg
Towing limit	1500kg
Towball limit	75kg

THIS YEAR THE Golf chalks up yet another class win. Since the Towcar Awards began, the VW has taken the honours more often than not.

It doesn't feel like a small car when you're towing. At the motorway limit the Golf feels secure and in control, an impression that's backed up by data from the caravan's Al-Ko ATC sensors. In the emergency lane-change test, the caravan slid around but never upset the car.

So long as the handbrake was given a firm pull, it held the outfit still on the 1-in-6 test hill. With a careful balance of clutch and throttle, the Golf coped with the slope in first gear and in reverse.

The 2.0 TDI has enough muscle to pull any suitable match. The engine is smooth and unflustered, even when pulling from low revs.

Inside, the cabin has decent head- and legroom, front and rear, although there's not enough luggage space for our full load of holiday kit.

The Golf should prove hassle-free to own, with strong resale values and impressive economy.

We say...

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

Stable, strong and practical, the VW Golf remains the best small towcar.



Did you know...
the lightest car in this year's test is the Hyundai i30, weighing just **1360kg**



Top used car up to 1424kg
Ford Focus 2.0 TDCi Zetec 5dr
12 months old £11,535 (approx)
36 months old £8435 (approx)

If there's one small car that runs the VW Golf close for towing ability, it's the Ford Focus. As a used buy it has the edge, because you can pick up a Ford of similar age and mileage for less. Your money buys plenty of towing performance, thanks to the pulling power of the 2.0-litre diesel engine. It's economical, too, returning around 56mpg if you go for the latest model (2011). The older Focus is scarcely less capable, and still returns around 51mpg. Either generation is great to drive, with nimble handling and sharp steering. Both cars are extremely stable at the legal limit and have performed well in our emergency lane-change test.

2 more cars in this category reviewed on the next page

up to 1424kg the best of the rest

Hyundai i30

1.6 CRDi (110PS) Blue Drive Active

List price	£17,995
Target Price	£17,272
Kerbweight	1360kg
85% match	1156kg
Towing limit	1500kg
Towball limit	75kg

THE NEW i30 can't match the Golf's all-round talents, but the Hyundai is good enough to make the VW work hard for its victory.

In the emergency lane-change, the i30 was in its element. While the caravan slid violently on high-speed runs, it never pulled the Hyundai off course.

At high speeds in a straight line the Hyundai wasn't quite as secure as the Golf, needing the odd steering correction, but we'd happily tow long distances behind the wheel of the i30.



There's a sense of style inside the i30 and a logical dash layout

BEST VALUE HATCHBACK



However, accelerating from 30-60mph takes 25.4 seconds. Get stuck behind a tractor and you could be there for some time.

At least you'll be comfortable while you wait for a long, clear straight: the i30 has a very agreeable ride. There's plenty of cabin space, and the boot swallowed all our holiday luggage except for the Aquaroll.

The Hyundai comes with a five-year warranty and breakdown

cover. That, together with the keen list price and long list of standard kit, earns it the 'Best Value Hatchback' award.

We say...

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

Great value for money and a stable towcar. A deserving runner-up.

Did you know...

even an experienced driver shouldn't tow a caravan weighing over **100%** of the towcar's weight

Nissan Juke

1.5 dCi Acenta Premium

List price	£17,095
Target Price	£16,052
Kerbweight	1404kg
85% match	1193kg
Towing limit	1250kg
Towball limit	75kg

IF THERE WERE a prize for the strangest towing gear, the Nissan Juke would win by a mile. The towbar mounts several inches to the right of centre, but fits at an angle so that the ball lines up with the centre of the car.

The odd towbar isn't the reason the Juke finishes third in its class. In the lane-change test the caravan was tugging at the back of the car on high-speed runs. With just 177lb.ft to call upon, the Juke laboured from 30-60mph in 23.1 seconds. On damp Tarmac it



The Juke is a quirky-looking car, but the interior isn't very practical

proved easy to spin the front wheels, and the hill start needed a careful balance of clutch and throttle to reach the top.

Style takes precedence over practicality, so don't expect a lot of space in the back or the boot.

It's not all bad news, though. The Juke may have been unsettled in the lane-change test, but on MIRA's mile-long straights it tracked true with little input from the driver. It's also a fun car to

drive, and our practicality testers were impressed by the standard-fit reversing camera – great for hitching up on your own.

We say...

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

Not the best towcar, but the Juke is certainly wacky and appealing.

"A fun car to drive, but more stylish than practical"



Test Figures

Volkswagen Golf 2.0 TDI 140 Match 5dr	🔴
30-60mph	
16.6 seconds	
30-0mph	
12.8m	
Hyundai i30 1.6 CRDi (110PS) Blue Drive Active	🔴
30-60mph	
25.4 seconds	
30-0mph	
12.7m	
Nissan Juke 1.5 dCi Acenta Premium	🔴
30-60mph	
23.1 seconds	
30-0mph	
13.9m	
Test conditions	
wet 🌧️ damp ☁️ dry ☀️	