

# 1575-1724kg

There's plenty of choice in the middleweight class as SUVs take on estates, MPVs and saloon cars



## CLASS WINNER

**Skoda**

Superb Estate  
2.0 TDI CR 170 SE

LIST PRICE	£22,320
TARGET PRICE	£21,294
KERBWEIGHT	1652kg
85% MATCH	1404kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1800kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	75kg

THIS IS THE second year in a row a Skoda Superb has won the

middleweight class, but this year it is the turn of the estate version.

The regular Superb has good luggage room. The estate is simply huge. There are 633 litres with the seats upright, and a huge 1865 litres if they are folded forward. If you've never heard of travelling light, this is the car for you.

Rear-seat space is exceptional for a family estate, with enough head- and legroom to rival some luxury cars. A giraffe could get comfortable. Large families might need more seats than the five in the Superb



**There's plenty of space in the front, even for very tall drivers**

Estate, but it's hard to imagine anyone wanting more room.

Size isn't everything, however, and fortunately the Superb tows, well, superbly. Our test car was fitted with the higher-powered version of the Volkswagen Group's 2.0-litre common-rail diesel, which pulls strongly from low revs and is much quieter than the previous-generation diesel. The 30-60mph time of just 12.3 seconds shows just how hard it pulls.

The Skoda's stability was even more impressive than its acceleration. Even at 35mph through the lane-change test, the back of the car was never pulled around by the caravan. Car and driver stayed confidently in control.

In our reversing test, the Skoda towed backwards smoothly with the

flexible engine at little more than idle. On the 1-in-6 hill start, the handbrake needed a firm pull but the Superb hauled the tourer to the top of the slope without fuss.

While the driving test team were all happy, the practicality judge did find some flaws. If you are unfortunate enough to have a puncture there's a tyre repair kit rather than a proper spare, although it's permissible to tow using this provision. What's more, the handbook's towing advice could be more detailed and easier to find.

A reasonable price tag, strong fuel economy (47.9mpg according to official figures) and a retained value of 44% after three years complete an excellent all-round performance. It is worth noting that a 4x4 version is available for £1525 more.

## We say...

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★☆
Practicality	★★★★☆
Buying & owning	★★★★☆
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★
Superb in name and nature. An excellent and worthy winner.	



**The Superb's boot is absolutely huge, especially with the seats down**



**Seat**  
Exeo ST 2.0 TDI  
CR 170 Sport

LIST PRICE	£23,190
TARGET PRICE	£22,098
KERBWEIGHT	1590kg
85% MATCH	1352kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1600kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	75kg

FOR A FEW hundred pounds more than the class-winning Skoda, you can have the Seat Exeo ST. The extra

cash buys a sportier design and some extra equipment, but our judges didn't feel the Seat matched the Skoda as a towcar.

Despite its firm suspension, the Exeo was shoved around by the caravan through the lane-change test. The push-me-pull-you routine started even on the first run through the cones at 30mph, although to be fair the driver never felt the van was about to take charge entirely.

Aside from that, most judges were happy with the Seat's high-

speed stability, although its numb steering didn't inspire confidence. The suspension made for a stiff ride and bumps were heard as well as felt.

Reversing up a gentle gradient proved simple enough, but on our 1-in-6 test hill the handbrake needed a very firm tug before it would stop the outfit. The powerful 2.0-litre diesel engine had no trouble pulling to the top of the test hill.

However, if you take all your worldly goods with you when



The Seat's cabin feels more upmarket than its price tag

touring, you'll find the Exeo ST isn't the roomiest estate. Our practicality judge couldn't find space for a full load of holiday clobber.

Rear-seat space also disappoints, with limited legroom in particular. As a hard-working family estate car, it's comprehensively beaten by the Skoda.

However, if you can live without the extra space, the Seat still makes an appealing alternative.

**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★

Well equipped and good value, but small inside for an estate.



Attractive design and seven seats mark out the 5008's cabin

**Peugeot**  
5008 2.0 HDi 150 Sport

LIST PRICE	£21,195
TARGET PRICE	£20,035
KERBWEIGHT	1635kg
85% MATCH	1390kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1500kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	70kg

IF YOU HAVE a little over £20,000 to spend on a seven-seat towcar, you could do a lot worse than the Peugeot 5008 2.0 HDi 150 Sport.

On paper, the HDi engine is far from the most powerful in this class, but it was strong enough to reverse car and caravan up a shallow slope with no protest from the clutch.

On the 1-in-6 test hill the electronic parking brake held the 5008 steady with none of the uncertainty of some cars' conventional handbrakes, and the flexible engine and sensibly chosen first gear made driving to the top of the hill simple.

Get stuck behind a tractor out in the sticks, and you shouldn't be

there for long. The 30-60mph time of 14.6 seconds is impressive for a car with just 150bhp. The engine remains smooth and quiet while getting up to speed.

Our performance tester was less happy with the 5008 through the lane-change test, where the back of the car soon got into an argument with the caravan about which direction to take. The car always won, though. The AI-Ko ATC system also detected some movement from the caravan when slowing down from 70mph.

With the rear two seats stowed away, the Peugeot coped with a full load of holiday luggage. Peugeot confirmed that the slim spare wheel is safe to tow with, although our practicality judge was disappointed to note that the towing limit drops if you load the car up to the Gross Vehicle Weight.

**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★

A superb MPV and a capable towcar, too.

TOWCAR AWARDS 2010

UP TO 1424kg

1425-1574kg

1575-1724kg

1725-1899kg

1900kg & ABOVE



**Vauxhall**  
Insignia Sports Tourer 1.6 T SRi

LIST PRICE	£23,790
TARGET PRICE	£20,676
KERBWEIGHT	1660kg
85% MATCH	1411kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1700kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	85kg

WE MAKE NO apologies for concentrating on diesels at the Towcar Awards, but the Vauxhall Insignia 1.6 T petrol had us intrigued.

The turbocharged petrol engine promises near-diesel economy with enough mid-range pull for towing. In practice, that's very nearly what you get. The 14 second 30-60mph time shows this is a quick car when the engine is put to work, although at very low revs it feels weak.

We've been happy with the stability of the Insignias we've tested, and the Sports Tourer was no exception. The electronic handbrake held first time on the hill start, although lots of clutch slip was needed to climb the hill.

Every piece of luggage went in the boot, but the towing electrics are tucked under the bumper, which makes hooking up awkward.

**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★
One of the best petrol-powered towcars tested in a long time.	

**BMW**  
X1 xDrive 23d SE

LIST PRICE	£29,975
TARGET PRICE	£29,034
KERBWEIGHT	1670kg
85% MATCH	1420kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2000kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	80kg

THE BMW X1 did many things well. The strong engine dragged car and caravan from 30-60mph in just 11.3 seconds. Speed was matched by stability, with a rock-solid feel at 70mph and a textbook performance in the lane-change test. It shrugged off the hill-start tests and needed a shorter distance to stop from 30mph than other cars in this class.

While it's hard to find fault with what the X1 does, it's easier to pick holes in the way it does it. The engine may be strong, but

compared with the Skoda Estate and Peugeot 5008 it's too noisy. The X1's cornering may be impeccable, but does the steering need to be so heavy? We'd rather the suspension was more yielding over bumps, too.

The boot didn't come close to swallowing all the luggage, and the rear seats are rather cramped. Then there's the price. Just under £30k is simply too much for a 4x4 of this size, even one with a BMW badge.

**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★
Extremely able, but with limited space and the price is too high.	



**Subaru**  
Legacy Tourer 2.0D SE

LIST PRICE	£25,820
TARGET PRICE	£24,559
KERBWEIGHT	1659kg
85% MATCH	1410kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1700kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	82kg

THE NEW SUBARU Legacy Tourer offers more space than its predecessor. Rear-seat space in particular is now far better, so adults should be comfortable on long trips. All but one small item of holiday luggage could be squeezed in the boot, which holds 526 litres with the rear seats up and 1677 with them lowered.

Look under the boot floor, though, and you won't find a spare wheel. There's a repair kit instead, and Subaru doesn't recommend towing with a repaired tyre, although to be fair, a spare wheel is available as an option.

Most judges enjoyed towing with the Legacy. Stability at high speeds was excellent, and the AI-Ko ATC system showed very little movement from the caravan when slowing from 70mph. Through the lane-change test the back of the car moved around only slightly.

The hill-start tests were tackled with ease, and the four-wheel-drive transmission would have come into its own in wet weather. However, the stiff, notchy gearbox did the car no

favours, and the 30-60mph time of 17.4 seconds lagged behind many rivals. The firm ride wasn't to everyone's taste, either.

That price tag doesn't help its cause. The Skoda is a better estate car, has the edge for towing and costs much less to buy and run.

**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★
A spacious and stable towcar, but rather expensive.	

**Top used cars**  
1575-1724kg

**Ford**  
Mondeo 2.0 TDCi  
Zetec Estate

12mth old	£13,655 (approx)
36mth old	£10,325 (approx)

WE RECOMMENDED the Mondeo as a used buy last year, and still think it's a great way to spend your money. In fact it's now an even better buy because the first of the current generation Mondeos are three years old and are becoming better value almost by the day.

The 2.0 TDCi engine is capable of pulling any suitable match and has a healthy turn of speed when the caravan has been left behind. It's economical, too. Expect well over 40mpg in day-to-day driving. What's more, the estate has more than enough luggage space for a fortnight's family holiday.

You don't buy a Mondeo solely for sensible reasons, though. It's the best family car to drive, with accurate, well-weighted steering and superb handling.



**Skoda**

Superb 2.0 TDI CR 170  
4x4 SE

LIST PRICE	£22,645
TARGET PRICE	£21,225
KERBWEIGHT	1722kg
85% MATCH	1464kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2000kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	75kg

LAST YEAR'S CLASS winner is still one of our favourite mid-sized towcars. The Superb gives you the benefits of four-wheel drive but asks few compromises in return.

At 44.1mpg fuel economy is just over 4mpg worse than the two-wheel-drive version, and much better than most four-wheel-drive SUVs. Cornering is stable whether towing or not, with none of the lean and wallow of some off-rovers.



The Superb offers luxury-car space for family-car money



Pushed really hard through the cones for the lane-change test, the Superb 4x4 matched the Superb Estate and BMW X1 and was never pulled off course by the caravan. Only when slowing from 70mph did the AI-Ko ATC system detect the tourer wandering slightly.

The Superb 4x4 needed 13.6 seconds to go from 30-60mph, which is a little longer than the lighter Superb Estate. From 30mph the outfit stopped in 11.6 metres, also trailing the estate slightly. In the hill-start test, the handbrake needed

a firm pull before it would hold. However, car and caravan reached the top of the 1-in-6 test slope without fuss.

On paper this model doesn't have the luggage space to match the Estate, but we still found enough room for all our holiday gear. We'd prefer to look under the boot and find a full-size spare rather than a repair kit, but Skoda confirms it can be used when towing if necessary, albeit restricted to 50mph.

If we could, we'd take the cheaper and more economical

estate, although if you head to grassy pitches in all weathers, this is still the car to beat.

**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★

A good all-rounder, though not as economical as some.



**Toyota**

Verso 2.0 D-4D T Spirit

LIST PRICE	£21,755
TARGET PRICE	£20,114
KERBWEIGHT	1700kg
85% MATCH	Not legal
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1300kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	55kg

THE TOYOTA VERSO is a frustrating towcar. In spite of a kerbweight of 1700kg and a determined diesel engine, it is restricted to pulling no more than 1300kg. The towball limit of 55kg is just as bad and will be difficult to abide by.

Pulling a tourer loaded to the legal maximum, the Toyota accelerated from 30-60mph in 16.6 seconds. That's no better than it should be. The brakes were more impressive, stopping car and caravan in just 10.3 metres.

Through the lane change the Verso was happy enough until the final run, when the back of the car began to move around, although the AI-Ko ATC showed that car and caravan remained stable when slowing from high speeds.

As an MPV, the Verso is on safer ground. The cabin is roomy for those in the front two rows, and the seats can be folded flat quickly for more luggage space.

**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★

A very good MPV which is held back by a low towing limit.

**Renault**

Grand Scenic 2.0 dCi 160  
Dynamique Tom Tom

LIST PRICE	£23,020
TARGET PRICE	£19,702
KERBWEIGHT	1703kg
85% MATCH	Not legal
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1300kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	75kg

ANOTHER CAR HELD back by its towing limit. The Renault Grand Scenic matches the Toyota's 1300kg maximum, although at least the 75kg noseweight figure is more in line with what we'd expect.

The Renault has a more powerful engine than the Toyota, which made it noticeably quicker. It took almost four fewer seconds to pull a tourer from 30-60mph.

However, the Grand Scenic wasn't as happy as the Verso in the lane

change test. The final high-speed run had to be aborted because the car was sliding so violently. That said, in a straight line at motorway speeds it felt very stable and handled less violent cornering well.

Inside, there's plenty of space for five. Seven can squeeze in, although it helps if the middle row of seats are moved forward a bit. You'll have to remove them to maximise luggage room.

**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★

Has a strong engine and space, but the towing limit is too low.



**Hyundai**  
ix35 2.0 CRDi Premium 4x4

LIST PRICE	£20,745
TARGET PRICE	TBA
KERBWEIGHT	1679kg
85% MATCH	1427kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2000kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	80kg

A LOT OF caravanners must want the all-weather ability of a 4x4 but don't want to pay through the nose for their car, fuel or road tax.

Step forward, the new Hyundai ix35. The list price hugely undercuts the BMW X1, and it's also much cheaper than a Ford Kuga. You can expect 48.7mpg, according to official figures, and carbon dioxide emissions of 154g/km will make paying your road tax each year relatively painless.

The Hyundai's equipment levels are also extremely good. Its 18-inch alloys, leather upholstery, dual-zone climate control and cruise control are all fitted as standard.

However, what's under the bonnet is not quite so impressive. The 134bhp 2.0-litre engine is short on punch when compared with its rivals here, with a 19-second time for the 30-60mph test. It's rather noisy, too. Braking was strong, however, bringing the outfit to a halt in just 10.8 metres.

Even so, the Hyundai needed more steering inputs than most to hold a straight course at 60mph and above. Through the lane-change manoeuvre, the car was



**Leather upholstery and cruise and climate control are standard**

dragged off-line even in the lower-speed runs.

The ix35 did manage to make up some lost ground in the hill-start tests. Reversing was problem-free and, other than needing a really firm pull on the handbrake, there was no trouble on the 1-in-6 test slope, either.

Our practicality judge fitted all but one item into the boot and was please to find a full-size spare wheel.



**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★

Well equipped and keenly priced but there are better towcars.

TOWCAR AWARDS 2010

UP TO 1424kg

1425-1574kg

**Audi**  
A4 Allroad 2.0 TDI Quattro

LIST PRICE	£29,905
TARGET PRICE	£27,935
KERBWEIGHT	1705kg
85% MATCH	1449kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1700kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	80kg

THE AUDI A4 Allroad's big brother, the A6 Allroad, is a former class winner in this competition. Is the smaller car as good? Not quite, but it's still a very fine towcar.

The Allroad comfortably held 60mph in top gear into a headwind, and with the breeze in its favour was still accelerating through 70mph. The brakes were among the best in this weight division, easy to apply smoothly but with aggressive bite when needed. The 30-0mph stop took 10.3 metres.

Straight-line stability was fine, but the Audi wasn't quite as secure through the lane-change test as the Skoda Superb Estate or BMW X1. On the final high-speed run the car's back end began to move around as the caravan tried to get its own way.



**The dashboard looks great, but the pedals are offset to the right**

In the reversing test, the engine and well-chosen ratio allowed car and caravan to move backwards smoothly with no sign of any

transmission strain. On the 1-in-6 test hill, the electronic parking brake held the outfit first time, every time. However, some drivers noticed the clutch smelling after they cleared the top of the hill.

It may be an estate like the class-winning Skoda, but the Allroad has nothing like as much luggage space as the Superb. We couldn't find space for two items from our typical luggage load. Under the boot floor there's a compact spare wheel, and Audi confirmed that this may be used when towing if necessary.



**We say...**

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★★★
Buying & owning	★★★★★
<b>Verdict</b>	★★★★★

A capable towcar, but not as practical as you might expect.

1575-1724kg

1725-1899kg

1900kg & ABOVE