

1725-1899kg

4x4s and SUVs clash in the battle of the cruiser-weights as we find the best in this heavier towcar class



CLASS WINNER

Mazda CX-7 2.2 D Sport Tech

LIST PRICE	£26,995
TARGET PRICE	£25,537
KERBWEIGHT	1875kg
85% MATCH	1594kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1800kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	85kg

WITH THE ARRIVAL of the new diesel model, the Mazda CX-7 can now fulfil its promise.

This car is a world better than the previous petrol-powered version. Not only is it far more economical (37.7mpg, according to official figures), but the power delivery is better suited to towing, with strong pull from 2000rpm which keeps on building.

Our acceleration runs were hampered by a strong headwind in one direction. In reality, the CX-7 is

much quicker than the recorded time of 18.4 seconds. Our judges described the Mazda's acceleration as 'very strong', 'excellent' and 'lively'.

The Mazda stopped even better than it went, needing just 10 metres to come to a halt from 30mph. When less dramatic deceleration was needed the brakes were easy to apply smoothly.

The Mazda was just as impressive in our stability tests. It was well behaved at 60mph and beyond in a



The finish could be better, but there's no shortage of kit

straight line, which should make for relaxed towing on the motorway. If you need to take avoiding action in a hurry and don't have room to brake, the Mazda will be on your side. It felt secure at all speeds through the emergency lane-change test.

The price tag is the wrong side of £26,000, but the long list of standard equipment is some compensation. Satellite navigation, a 6-CD changer, electrically adjustable leather seats, climate control and a rear-view camera are standard fit.



The boot is large enough to cope with a family's holiday luggage

Our practicality judge was pleased to find the parking camera and managed to fit the full load of holiday luggage in the boot. However, the handbook warned against using the space-saver spare wheel when towing, and further points were lost for the absence of a Trailer Stability Programme to help the driver deal with a snake.

These reservations are soon at the back of your mind once the van has been unhitched, because the CX-7 is such good fun to drive.

We say...

Towing	★★★★★
Solo	★★★★★
Practicality	★★★☆☆
Buying & owning	★★★★★
Verdict	★★★★★
Great fun to drive and good value for money, too.	

Top used cars 1725 - 1899kg

Jaguar XJ 2.7 TDVi Executive

12mthold	£29,085 (approx)
36mthold	£20,465 (approx)

ON THE FACE of it, the Jaguar XJ is an unlikely towcar. You expect to see large estates and 4x4s towing, but luxury saloons aren't such

common sights at touring parks up and down the country.

However, as we discovered first in 2008 and again last year, it does the job brilliantly. Best of all, the arrival of the new XJ means prices of the old car look ever more reasonable. A three-year old car will now set you back around £20,000.

That's well under half the cost of a new Jaguar XJ.

Performance from the 2.7-litre diesel is excellent, coaxing any suitable match to the legal limit with almost indecent haste. The chassis is a perfect foil for the silken aggression of the engine, matching comfort to control better than

just about any other luxury car we can think of.

Compare it with more modern luxury cars and space in this XJ's back seats could be more generous, but this is a minor quibble. There's no doubt about it in our minds. The XJ Executive is a great car and an excellent used buy.

Honda
CR-V 2.2 iDTEC EX auto

LIST PRICE	£29,135
TARGET PRICE	£27,655
KERBWEIGHT	1848kg
85% MATCH	Not legal
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1500kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	100kg

THE HONDA CR-V has impressed us in the past. Now it's back, with new looks and a new automatic gearbox as well.

Unfortunately, it's the gearbox that is the CR-V's undoing. Choosing the auto over the manual wipes 500kg from the towing limit at a stroke, and means the Honda can't legally pull an 85% match.

The auto also blunts the Honda's performance. The 30-60mph time of 18.6 seconds may be only slightly behind the Mazda, but the Honda's test took place in still air, while the Mazda battled a stiff headwind in one direction. *Practical Caravan* has previously tested these two cars towing identical caravans and found the Mazda 3.2 seconds quicker. What's more, the automatic gearbox can also be annoyingly indecisive, chopping and changing gears when towing at a steady 60mph.



The dashboard is functional and clearly laid out

Next to the firm and sporting Mazda, the Honda's suspension feels rather soft. That benefits ride comfort, but gives a less solid feeling when towing. However, the CR-V put in a respectable performance in the lane-change test. Eventually the front tyres would push wide, but the back end of the car resisted any pushing and shoving from the caravan.

There were few complaints about the hill start. So long as the handbrake was pulled on firmly, the outfit stopped still on the 1-in-6 slope. The Honda pulled easily to the top of the hill.

The large boot managed to take almost every item of luggage, but points were lost for the space-saver spare, which Honda told us was not suitable for towing.

We say...

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

Spacious, but the auto gearbox compromises towing ability.



Volvo
XC60 2.4D DRIVe SE Lux

LIST PRICE	£30,795
TARGET PRICE	NA
KERBWEIGHT	1836kg
85% MATCH	Not legal
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	1500kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	75kg

THE FRONT-WHEEL-DRIVE version of last year's overall champion doesn't just make the Volvo less able to tow off a muddy pitch. It also drops the towing limit to 1500kg, which means it can't tow an 85% match.

It's a shame, because otherwise the XC60 gives the Mazda CX-7 some very stiff competition. Even at 70mph the Volvo felt absolutely secure. In the lane-change the caravan could be felt tugging at the back of the car, though.

When it came to the next category, our practicality judge had no trouble fitting a full load of holiday gear in the boot, and although our test car came with a compact spare, Volvo confirmed it can be used when towing.

Since our test, Volvo has replaced this model with the 2.0 D3 DRIVe. The towing limit on the new car climbs 100kg to 1600kg.

We say...

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

Add a higher towing limit and the XC60 could rival the Mazda.

Suzuki
Grand Vitara 1.9 DDiS SZ5

LIST PRICE	£21,020
TARGET PRICE	£20,090
KERBWEIGHT	1755kg
85% MATCH	1492kg
MAX TOWING WEIGHT	2000kg
TOWBALL LIMIT	85kg

PRICE IS THE Suzuki's most compelling selling point. At £21k, it's cheap for a 4x4 of this size. The diesel engine returns respectable fuel economy, and you won't go short of creature comforts.

However, it's not the most stable towcar. In the lane-change test the Grand Vitara felt out of its depth on the two higher-speed runs, pairing a shortage of front-end grip with too much pushing and pulling from the caravan. Even in a straight line the Suzuki needed more steering

correction than most at 60mph and wasn't comfortable at 70mph.

It had no problems reversing up a shallow slope, while on the 1-in-6 test hill the handbrake held with a firm pull, although it took some dexterity with the clutch and throttle to pull up the slope smoothly.

The boot took all luggage items except one, mirrors were easy to fit and Suzuki confirmed that the spare wheel was suitable for towing.

We say...

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

The price is right, but the Suzuki struggles in this company.



TOWCAR AWARDS 2010

UP TO 1424kg

1425-1574kg

1575-1724kg

1725-1899kg

1900kg & ABOVE