£20,780

£14,295

£13,495

Up to 1424kg class winner

Weight isn't everything when towing, as the best cars in the lightest weight class demonstrate with ease. Here we reveal the finest small tow cars available today



Skoda **Octavia**

| Price | £21,990 |
|-------------------|---------|
| Target Price | £20,819 |
| Kerbweight | 1330kg |
| 85% match | 1131kg |
| Max towing weight | 1600kg |
| Towball limit | 75kg |

IT HAD TO happen eventually. The VW Golf has been dethroned as our favourite small tow car by the new Skoda Octavia. Either would have been a worthy winner, but the Octavia outpointed the Golf, thanks to a huge cabin and impressive value, as well as being superb to tow with.

No other small family hatchback packs in so much space - for passengers or luggage. In fact, the new generation is not really a 'small' family hatchback at all, with enough

54 Camping & Caravanning July 2013

head and legroom to rival larger cars, especially for those travelling in the rear seats. The interior finish has also taken a big step forward compared

with the previous generation. You won't need to travel light in the new Octavia. There are 590 litres of luggage space with the rear seats upright – that's 210 litres more than the Golf. We found space for all of our typical touring luggage load, with room to spare. That helped the Skoda to a

strong score from our practicality

testers, as did the inclusion of a trailer stability control system.

When a car is as fundamentally stable towing a 'van as the new Octavia, you shouldn't need to rely on electronic help very often. Even in the fastest run between the cones in our lane-change test, the Octavia stuck to its course, however much the caravan slid around behind it.

Despite a damp test track the braking performance was excellent, and the 30-60mph time of 12.7 seconds shows the strength of the 2.0-litre diesel engine. Thanks to excellent fuel economy, the Octavia should prove cheap to run for a car with such a strong performance.

| Towing | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Solo | |
| Practicality | |
| Buying and owning | |
| Verdict | **** |
| Good to drive, stable wher | n towing and |

For weights and specifications of every car, turn to page 72

exceptionally roomy.

In association with

Volkswagen Golf

2.0 TDI 150 GT DSG 5dr

| Price | £25,090 |
|-------------------|---------|
| Target Price | £23,145 |
| Kerbweight | 1405kg |
| 85% match | 1194kg |
| Max towing weight | 1600kg |
| Towball limit | 80kg |

THE NEW VW Golf Mk7 runs the class-winning Octavia a very close race. In fact, when compared purely on towing terms, some judges marked the VW just ahead of the Skoda.

It's particularly strong in the hill-start test. The electronic parking brake holds car and caravan still on a 1-in-6 slope, and there's no juggling the clutch and throttle because the DSG transmission does away with the clutch pedal.

Admittedly, the Golf is not as roomy as the Skoda, but it is well made and fuel-efficient, and its strong resale values help offset the high price.

| Towing | ♦♦♦♦ |
|-------------------|-------|
| Solo | **** |
| Practicality | ●●●○○ |
| Buying and owning | **** |
| /erdict | **** |
| | |

An excellent tow car, just pipped at the post by the Skoda as an all-rounder.

Kia Cee'd **Sportswagon**

| 1.6 CRDi '3' | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Price | £21,09 |
| Target Price | £19,24 |
| Kerbweight | 1420k |
| 85% match | 1207k |
| Max towing weight | 1500k |
| Towball limit | 75k |
| | |

THE KIA CEE'D usually performs well at the Tow Car Awards, and the latest Sportswagon (estate) continues that tradition.

As a tow car, the Cee'd's stability is its most impressive strength. In the lane-change test the Kia held on even when really pushed hard, and it refused to let the caravan bully the back of the car.

The Sportswagon offers 528 litres of space with the rear seats upright. All but one item of luggage from our test load fitted in without a problem.

A keen price and comprehensive equipment make the Kia Cee'd Sportswagon good value.

| Towing | |
|---|-------|
| Solo | ����○ |
| Practicality | ����○ |
| Buying and owning | ����○ |
| Verdict | **** |
| Not the quickest tow car, but practical | |

and keenly priced.

Honda Civic 1.6i-DTECES



DESPITE ACHIEVING 78.5MPG on the combined cycle, the Civic diesel is strong enough for towing, pulling its van 30-60mph in 18.7 seconds.

It needed steering corrections in crosswinds, but was otherwise stable, and Honda has led the What Car? Reliability Survey for seven years.

| Towing | *** |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Solo | ���○○ |
| Practicality | ���○○ |
| Buying and owning | *** |
| Verdict | ●●●○○ |
| Chante final and warre | olioblo thioic |

Cheap to fuel and very reliable, this is a decent tow car.

Kia Rio 1.4 CRDi '3' 3dr



OUR WHAT CAR? road tester praised the Kia in the lane-change test: "Everything was very controlled simple, effective and undramatic."

At motorway speeds, little steering input was needed to keep a straight course. Like all Kias, the well equipped Rio comes with a seven-year warranty.

| Towing | ����⊖ |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Solo | ●●●○○ |
| Practicality | ●●○○○ |
| Buying and owning | ●●●●○ |
| Verdict | *** |
| Our favourite very small tow car is | |

surprisingly stable.

Dacia Duster 1.5 dCi Ambiance 4x4



THOUGH A BIT rough and ready, the Duster five-seat 4x4 is a bargain. It makes a decent tow car, too. Soft suspension gives a slightly floaty

feel to the ride when towing, but this doesn't translate into instability at speed. In fact, we'd be more than happy to tow on long motorway journeys with the Duster.

| Towing | *** |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Solo | ���○(|
| Practicality | *** |
| Buying and owning | €€€€ |
| Verdict | *** |
| A lot of tow car for very | little money. |

Ford B-Max 1.0T 125PS Ecoboost S/S Titanium



THE B-MAX'S BOTTOM towing limit makes this Ford suitable for pop-ups and trailer tents rather than caravans, but if that's what you tow, there are good reasons to consider this supermini-based MPV.

It was stable at speed, too, though less happy in the lane-change test. The tiny boot lets it down.

| Towing | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Solo | |
| Practicality | €€00 |
| Buying and owning | |
| Verdict | |
| A fun but expensive small MPV. | |

Peugeot 208 1.6 VTi Feline 5dr



PETROL SUPERMINIS AREN'T the most obvious tow cars, but if you have a lightweight trailer you may not need the extra torque of a diesel.

That's shown by the 208's 30-60mph time of 17.8 seconds. At speed it struggled with headwinds, but took the lane-changing in its stride.

| Towing | €€€○○ |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Solo | ●●●○○ |
| Practicality | ₩0000 |
| Buying and owning | ●●●○○ |
| Verdict | ***○○ |
| For occasional lightweight towing, | |

the 208 performs well enough.

July 2013 Camping & Caravanning 55