

Dinghy Towing

2003

■ CHRIS HEMER

Every year, *MotorHome* compiles a list of vehicles that can be towed four-down behind a motorhome with no modifications required. As usual, this year's guide contains *only those vehicles that have been approved by their manufacturers for towing* (so if you don't see it listed, it hasn't been approved), and we've left out any vehicles that have towing speed limits slower than 55 mph or distance limits of less than 200 miles. Additionally, we're highlighting only manufacturers that have performed significant revisions to their existing models, or have introduced new models.

Because of some confusion in the past, it is also important to note that there are some towable vehicles that may not appear on this list. The reasons are many; some manufacturers don't want any liability or warranty problems that may arise from dinghy towing one of their vehicles; others have never conducted research to see if, in fact, their vehicles can be towed, and find it easier just to say they can't be. Honda, for example, recommends only a few of its vehicles for towing, but acknowledges that almost all of its vehicles can be towed, and even distributes literature to its dealer network that tells customers how to dinghy-tow its vehicles. As you read this guide, it is important to keep in mind that a lot of the information we receive from automobile manufacturers is preliminary. That is to say, we may be informed that a vehicle is towable at presstime, only to find out later that the owner's manual says it can't be towed. In some instances, the owner's manual will say the vehicle can't be towed, although the manufacturer assures us it can be.

Confusing? Yes. Dinghy towing, as popular as it is with RVers, is still a foreign concept to those who don't RV. So, remember: *Buyer beware*. If you see a vehicle in

this guide that appeals to you, go to your dealer, ask if you can see the owner's manual (a good dealer will not have a problem with this if you express your concerns) and look up "dinghy towing" or "recreational towing" in the owner's manual index. If the procedure(s) for dinghy towing is too involved, or if the manual states that the vehicle you are considering is *not towable*, look into purchasing a different vehicle. You'll likely encounter many RVers who tow vehicles. Ask them how satisfied they are with their vehicles and what procedures are involved in towing them.

If you've got your heart set on a specific model, and the manufacturer states that the vehicle cannot be towed, there are products offered through RV-supply stores, such as Camping World, that may allow the vehicle to be towed through small modifications to the vehicle's drivetrain. Finally, make sure that a towing baseplate is available for that vehicle before you buy, and make sure that towing the vehicle you are considering will not exceed your coach's gross combination weight rating (gcwr). Some coach manufacturers place limits on the amount of weight that can be towed without dinghy brakes, so it pays to research this as well.

We know, it seems like a lot of stuff to remember. However, it's important that you learn it now before you spend your hard-earned dollars on a vehicle that you can't take with you.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of all ratings, but because our information is often preliminary at the time of publication, some numbers may have changed by the time you visit the dealer's showroom. When in doubt, consult the manufacturer's towing guide (available at the dealership) or the vehicle owner's manual to be certain.

DINGHY TOWING 2003

TOWABLE CARS

Model	Base Curb Weight (lb)	Speed/Distance Limits	Manual Trans	Automatic Trans	Mileage City/Hwy	Base Retail
C h e v r o l e t						
Cavalier Coupe	2,617	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 25/33 Auto: 24/32	\$14,025
Cavalier Sedan	2,676	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 25/33 Auto: 24/32	\$14,175
Malibu	3,106	65/None	NA	Yes	20/29	\$17,680
D a i m l e r C h r y s l e r						
Neon	2,581	None	Yes	No	27/33	\$12,585
PT Cruiser	3,108	None	Yes	No	20/27	\$16,595
Sebring/GTC	3,064	None	Yes	No	22/29	\$20,110
Stratus Coupe	3,064	None	Yes	No	22/29	\$18,880
F o r d						
Focus	2,598	None	Yes	No	27/36	\$12,470
Mustang	3,129	None	Yes	No	20/29	\$17,475
ZX2	2,464	None	Yes	No	26/33	\$12,815
H y u n d a i						
Accent	2,255	Legal/None	Yes	No	27/37	\$8,999
Elantra	2,635	Legal/None	Yes	No	25/33	\$12,499
Sonata	3,181	Legal/None	Yes	No	22/30	\$15,499
Tiburon	2,940	Legal/None	Yes	No	23/31	\$15,999
N i s s a n						
350Z	3,188	60/500	Yes	No	20/26	\$26,269
Altima 2.5	3,001	60/500	Yes	No	23/29	\$16,649
Maxima	3,233	60/500	Yes	No	21/28	\$24,899
Sentra	2,537	60/500	Yes	No	27/35	\$12,099
O l d s m o b i l e						
Alero GX Coupe	2,946	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 25/33 Auto: 24/32	\$17,725
P o n t i a c						
GrandAm SE	3,066	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 25/33 Auto: 24/32	\$17,030

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TOWABLE CARS

Model	Base Curb Weight (lb)	Speed/Distance Limits	Manual Trans	Automatic Trans	Mileage City/Hwy	Base Retail
Sunfire	2,606	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 24/33 Auto: 23/32	\$14,870
Vibe	2,701	None	Yes	No	29/36	\$16,340

S a t u r n

ION Sedan	2,692	*	Yes	No	26/33	\$11,995
L-Series	2,989	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 25/33 Auto: 24/33	\$17,620

* Information not available at presstime.

S u b a r u

Impreza 2.5 RS Sedan	2,965	None	Yes	No	21/28	\$19,095
Impreza 2.5 TS Wagon	3,045	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$17,595
Legacy L	3,255	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$19,495
Legacy L Wagon	3,345	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$20,195
Outback Sport	3,050	None	Yes	No	20/28	\$18,795
WRX	3,085	None	Yes	No	20/28	\$24,195
WRX Sport Wagon	3,165	None	Yes	No	20/27	\$23,695

S u z u k i

Aerio S/GS Sedan	2,628	55/200	Yes	No	26/32	\$13,499
Aerio SX Wagon	2,630	55/200	Yes	No	26/32	\$14,999

T o y o t a

Camry LE	3,086	None	Yes	No	23/33	\$18,970
Celica GT	2,425	None	Yes	No	27/33	\$17,305
Celica GT-S	2,500	None	Yes	No	23/32	\$21,970
Corolla CE	2,502	None	Yes	No	32/41	\$13,570
Echo 2DR	2,035	None	Yes	No	35/43	\$10,105
Echo 4DR	2,055	None	Yes	No	35/43	\$10,695
Matrix 2WD	2,679	None	Yes	No	29/36	\$16,180
MR2 Spyder	2,195	None	Yes	N/A	26/32	\$24,570

TOWABLE SUVS & PICKUPS

Model	Base Curb Weight (lb)	Speed/Distance Limits	Manual Trans	Automatic Trans	Mileage City/Hwy	Base Retail
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A c u r a

MDX	4,328	65/None*	NA	Yes	17/23	**
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* Follow prescribed automatic-transmission-recirculation procedure after every eight hours of towing.

** Information not available at presstime.

TOWABLE SUVS & PICKUPS

Model	Base Curb Weight (lb)	Speed/Distance Limits	Manual Trans	Automatic Trans	Mileage City/Hwy	Base Retail
C h e v r o l e t / G M C						
Avalanche	5,678	None	N/A	Yes	17/23	\$34,394
Blazer 2DR 4WD	3,848	None	Yes (a)*	Yes	15/18	\$22,295
Envoy/TrailBlazer 4WD	4,616	None	NA	Yes	15/21	\$28,175
Envoy XL/TrailBlazer EXT 4WD	4,968	None	NA	Yes	15/20	\$32,885
Silverado/Sierra 1500 Series 4WD	4,246	None	Yes**	Yes**	15/20	\$21,113
Suburban/Yukon XL 4WD	5,123	None	N/A	Yes**	14/16	\$39,006
Tahoe/Yukon 4WD	5,050	None	N/A	Yes**	14/18	\$36,272
Tracker 2DR 4WD	2,811	55/200***	Yes	Yes	23/26	\$17,340
Tracker 4DR 4WD	2,987	55/200***	Yes	Yes	22/25	\$18,030

(a) Available in Blazer Xtreme package only.

* Transfer case must be in NEUTRAL.

** Transfer case must be in NEUTRAL, ignition in the OFF position, and the fuse removed.

*** After 200 miles, the transfer-case oil must be circulated for one minute before continuing.

D o d g e

Dakota 4WD	3,909	None	Yes	Yes	15/20	\$19,200
Durango 4WD	4,379	None	NA	Yes	13/18	\$28,250
Ram 4WD	4,718	None	Yes	Yes	13/18	\$24,465

F o r d

Escape 2WD	2,991	55/None	Yes	No	23/28	\$18,670
Escape 4WD	3,133	55/None	Yes	No	22/25	\$20,295
Explorer Sport 2WD	3,689	55/None	Yes	No	17/22	\$21,355
Explorer Sport Trac 2WD	4,105	55/None	Yes	No	17/21	\$22,255
Explorer Sport Trac 4WD	4,318	55/None	Yes	Yes ¹	16/20	\$25,024
Explorer 4D 4WD	4,449	55/None	NA	Yes ²	15/19	\$24,585
F-150 4WD	3,990	55/None	Yes ^{3,4}	Yes ^{3,4}	16/20	\$18,540
F-250/350 SD 4WD	5,837	55/None	Yes ³	Yes ³	13/17	\$24,940
Ranger	3,085	55/None	Yes	No	22/26	\$16,995
Ranger 4WD	3,411	55/None	Yes	No	17/20	\$23,940

1. With dealer-installed Neutral Tow Kit (part no. 3L2J7H332-AA).

2. With dealer-installed Neutral Tow Kit (part no. 1L2J7H332-AA).

3. Manual transfer case only (not electronic shift-on-the-fly 4x4).

4. Requires that the center disconnect be locked out by capping off one of the front-axle vacuum motor lines. See your Ford dealer for assistance.

Note: Different vehicles have different restrictions and towing procedures. Contact your Ford dealer for complete details.

TOWABLE SUVS & PICKUPS

Model	Base Curb Weight (lb)	Speed/Distance Limits	Manual Trans	Automatic Trans	Mileage City/Hwy	Base Retail
H o n d a						
CR-V	3,201	Legal/None	Yes	Yes ¹	22/26	*
Element	3,456	Legal/None	Yes	Yes ¹	*	*
Pilot	4,416	65/None	NA	Yes ²	17/23	\$26,900
<p>1. Only with prescribed towing procedure. 2. Follow prescribed automatic-transmission recirculation procedure after every eight hours of towing. * Information not available at presstime.</p>						
H u m m e r						
H2	6,400	None	NA	Yes	11/13	\$48,065
H y u n d a i						
Santa Fe FWD*	3,494	Legal/None	Yes	No	21/28	\$17,399
* Base model, four-cylinder only.						
I s u z u						
Ascender 4WD	4,967	Legal/None	NA	Yes	15/20	*
* Information not available at presstime.						
J e e p						
Liberty 4WD	3,826	None	Yes	Yes	20/24	\$18,745
Grand Cherokee 4WD	3,989	None	Yes	Yes	15/20	\$28,015
Wrangler	3,235	None	Yes	Yes	19/20	\$15,665
L a n d R o v e r						
Discovery 4.6	4,576	None	NA	Yes	12/16	\$34,350
Range Rover	5,379	None	NA	Yes	12/17	\$71,200
M a z d a						
B-Series 2WD	2,960	55/None	Yes	No	20/25	\$13,130
B-Series 4WD	3,380	55/None	Yes*	Yes*	17/20	\$21,095
Tribute DX FWD	2,991	55/None	Yes	No	23/28	\$18,200
* With manual transfer case.						
N i s s a n						
Frontier 2WD	3,196	60/500	Yes	No	22/25	\$12,989
Frontier 4WD	3,885	60/500	Yes*	No	15/18	\$18,599
Pathfinder SE 4WD	3,915	60/500	Yes*	No	16/18	\$28,799

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TOWABLE SUVS & PICKUPS

Model	Base Curb Weight (lb)	Speed/Distance Limits	Manual Trans	Automatic Trans	Mileage City/Hwy	Base Retail
Xterra 4WD	3,589	60/500	Yes*	No	19/24	\$17,999

Note: After driving 500 miles, idle engine in *NEUTRAL* for five minutes to circulate fluid.

* 4WD transfer case must be left in *NEUTRAL*.

S a t u r n

VUE	3,179	65/None	Yes	No	23/28	\$16,325
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S u b a r u

Baja	3,485	None	Yes	No	20/25	\$23,995
Forester 2.5X	3,090	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$20,545
Outback Wagon	3,435	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$23,045

S u z u k i

Grand Vitara 4WD	3,197	55/200	Yes*	Yes**	19/21	\$19,599
Vitara 4WD	2,987	55/200	Yes*	Yes**	22/25	\$17,099
XL-7 4WD	3,682	55/200	Yes*	Yes**	17/20	\$20,799

* Stop towing vehicle every 200 miles. Leave manual transmission in second gear. With the transfer case in *NEUTRAL*, start engine and rev for about one minute with the clutch engaged to circulate oil in the transfer case.

** Stop towing vehicle every 200 miles. With the transfer case lever in *Neutral*, start engine, shift into *DRIVE* and rev engine for about one minute to circulate oil in the transfer case. Shift into *PARK* before next towing.

T o y o t a

RAV4 2WD	2,711	None	Yes	No	25/31	\$16,525
RAV4 4WD	2,877	55/200*	Yes	No	22/27	\$17,925

* After 200 miles, engine must be started and allowed to idle for more than three minutes before continuing to tow.