

# New models from Saturn, Ford, Oldsmobile and Nissan add to the list of vehicles suitable for towing on all fours

■ DOUG MARION

**D**inghy towing continues to be very popular among the motorhome crowd, and the list of entries capable of being towed on all fours still hovers around the old standbys, including the Big Three. At presstime, the dinghy total is 30 cars plus 34 trucks and sport-utility vehicles (SUVs).

In this field of towables, Saturn is the only vehicle other than a truck or SUV that is suitable for towing with an automatic transmission. Saturn has introduced an L-series line that includes three bigger sedans and two larger station wagons. While the Oldsmobile Cutlass is gone, the second-year Alero is now towable with a five-speed manual transmission. Ford's all-new Focus can also be towed with a manual transmission. This compact car is designed to seat five adults comfortably and is available as a three-door coupe or a four-door sedan/station wagon. Mercury's sporty Cougar and Mountaineer SUV made the Y2K list, as did Nissan's all-new Xterra SUV. Listed herein are individual manufacturer highlights for 2000. Vehicles not listed here are not approved by the manufacturers for dinghy towing.

SE



Chevrolet Metro LSI Coupe



Saturn LW1 Wagon

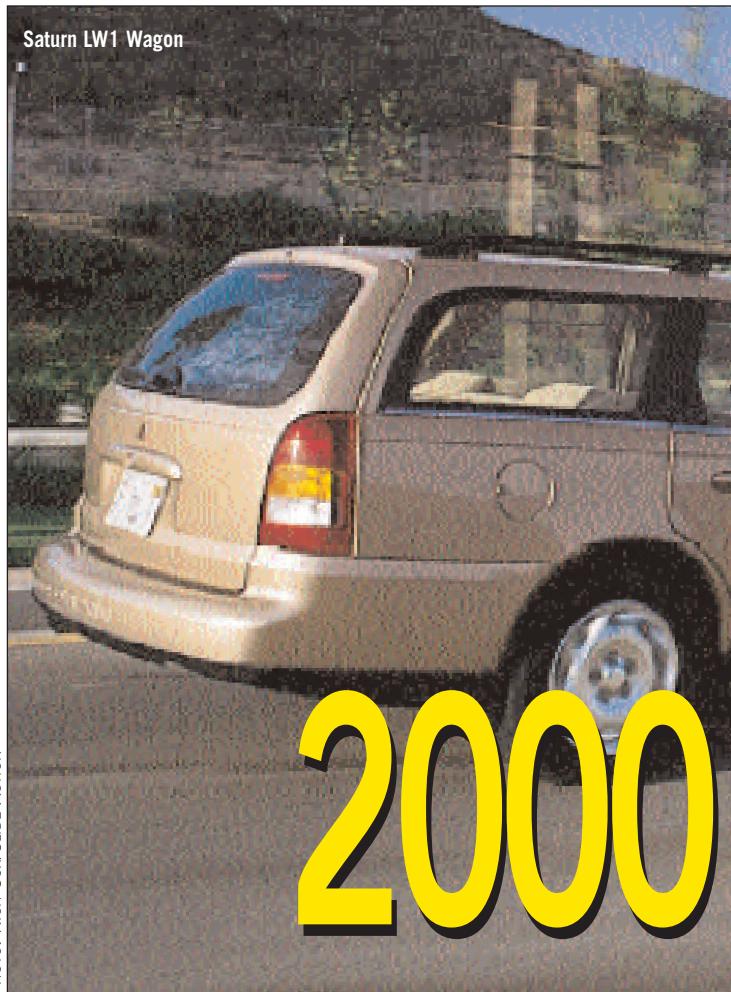
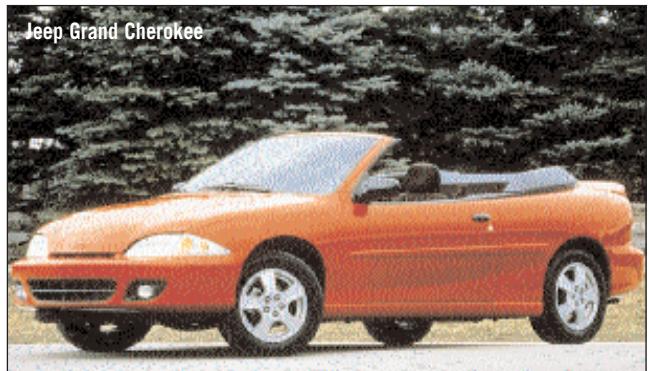


PHOTO: RICH COX/SIDE ACTION

## General Motors

**G**one is the Chevy Malibu of old, which was towable, replaced with a new Malibu that is not. The Oldsmobile Cutlass, a sibling to the Malibu, has also been retired. Good news at Oldsmobile is that its \$21,000 Alero is officially towable with DOHC 2.4-liter, four-cylinder engine and five-speed manual transmission. All Chevrolet Cavalier and Pontiac Sunfire models are towable with manual transmission. The Sunfire's tow-speed maximum has been increased to 65 mph. Saturn's new L-series sedan and wagon add nicely to its fleet of towables. For pickup and SUV dinghy service, the Chevrolet/GMC offerings include the Tahoe/Yukon 4WD, all full-size 4WD pickups, Suburban/Yukon XL 4WD and the Tracker.

Jeep Grand Cherokee



Oldsmobile Alero



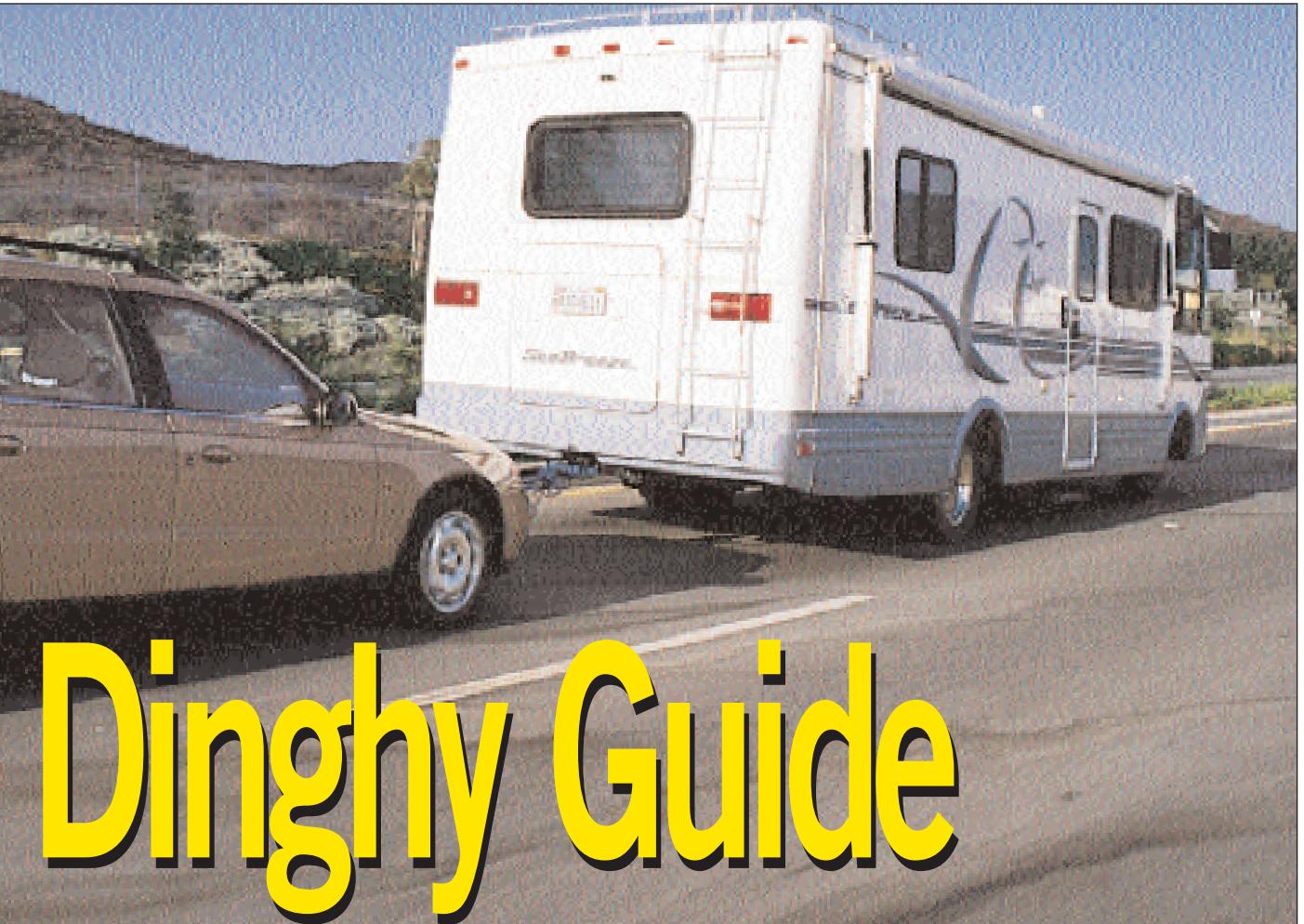
Ford Explorer Sport



Nissan Pathfinder



Dodge Dakota Quad Cab



# Dinghy Guide

## DaimlerChrysler

**T**he two- and four-door Dodge Neon with manual transmission continues to be the only car in the lineup that is dinghy-towable. In its pickup and SUV lineup, the Dakota and Ram 4WD trucks and Durango 4WD SUV are towable. Ditto for Jeep Wrangler, Cherokee and Grand Cherokee 4WDs. The Neon's curb weight is 2,559 pounds and it has a base retail price of \$11,600. Its engine is a potent 132-hp, SOHC, 16-valve alloy-head four-cylinder. The Dakota weighs 3,378 pounds, compared to the Jeep Wrangler's 3,094 pounds. Price-wise, the Dakota's base retail is \$17,000, while the base Wrangler is \$14,460. For 4WD flat-towing, the factory has printed a specific pre-towing procedure in the owner's manual.

Nissan Frontier Crew Cab



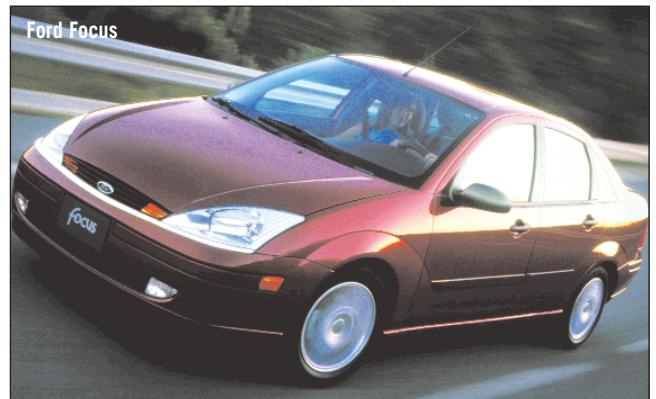
# 2000 DINGHY GUIDE

## TOWABLE CARS

	BASE CURB WEIGHT	SPEED/DISTANCE LIMITS	MANUAL TRANS	AUTOMATIC TRANS	EPA MPG CITY/HWY	BASE RETAIL PRICE
<b>CHEVROLET</b>						
Cavalier	2,584	55/NONE	YES	NO	25/37	\$13,065
Metro	1,895	55/NONE	YES	NO	44/49	\$ 9,185
<b>DODGE/PLYMOUTH</b>						
Neon 2-dr	2,470	NONE	YES	NO	28/35	\$11,620
Neon 4-dr	2,559	NONE	YES	NO	28/35	\$11,820
<b>FORD/MERCURY</b>						
Escort Sedan/ZX2	2,468	NONE	YES	NO	28/37	\$11,082
Focus	2,551	NONE	YES	NO	28/35	\$11,865
Cougar	2,898	55/NONE	YES	NO	24/34	\$16,445
Mystique	2,700	55/NONE	YES	NO	20/29	\$17,445
<b>HYUNDAI</b>						
Accent	2,101	LEGAL/NONE	YES	NO	28/37	\$ 9,899
Elantra	2,458	LEGAL/NONE	YES	NO	23/32	\$12,399
Tiburon	2,566	LEGAL/NONE	YES	NO	24/32	\$13,599
<b>MITSUBISHI</b>						
Mirage	2,125	NONE	YES	NO	33/40	\$10,252
<b>NISSAN</b>						
Altima XE	2,859	70/500	YES	NO	24/31	\$15,140
Maxima GXE	3,012	70/500	YES	NO	22/27	\$21,049
Sentra	2,315	70/500	YES	NO	30/40	\$11,799

### Ford/Mercury

**G**one are the Ford Contour and Mercury Tracer, but on the list are the Ford Escort sedan and ZX2, the new Ford Focus, the Mercury Cougar and Mystique, the Ford Explorer, Mercury Mountaineer 4WD, Ford F-150 4WD and F-250 Super Duty 4WD and the Ford Ranger. Prices range from around \$11,000 to more than \$25,000, so there are not only a lot of vehicles to choose from, but a wide price range as well. The Focus' curb weight is 2,551 pounds, and power choices are two: 8-valve 110-hp or 16-valve 130-hp 2.0-liter I-4s. The Explorer and Mountaineer with Control-Trac 4WD systems must be equipped with the factory Neutral Control Kit, available at Ford or Mercury dealerships nationwide.



# 2000 DINGHY GUIDE

## TOWABLE CARS

	BASE CURB WEIGHT	SPEED/DISTANCE LIMITS	MANUAL TRANS	AUTOMATIC TRANS	EPA MPG CITY/HWY	BASE RETAIL PRICE
<b>OLDSMOBILE</b>						
Alero GL	3,026	65/NONE	YES	NO	22/31	\$18,185
<b>PONTIAC</b>						
Sunfire	2,630	65/NONE	YES	NO	24/34	\$12,867
<b>SATURN</b>						
SC Series	2,308	65/NONE	YES	YES	MANUAL 28/39 AUTO 27/37	\$12,535
SL Series	2,326	65/NONE	YES	YES	MANUAL 28/39 AUTO 27/37	\$10,685
SW Series	2,392	65/NONE	YES	YES	MANUAL 28/38 AUTO 26/35	\$14,290
L Series	2,910	65/NONE	YES	YES	MANUAL 24/32 AUTO 22/30	\$15,010
<b>SUBARU</b>						
Impreza L Sedan	2,690	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$15,895
Impreza L Wagon	2,795	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$16,295
Outback Sport	2,835	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$18,095
Legacy L	2,885	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$19,195
Legacy Brighton Wagon	2,905	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$18,395
<b>SUZUKI</b>						
Esteem Sedan	2,227	55/NONE	YES	NO	30/37	\$11,711
Esteem Wagon	2,284	55/NONE	YES	NO	27/33	\$12,191
Swift Hatchback	1,895	55/NONE	YES	NO	39/43	\$ 9,099

## Nissan

Complementing the Altima XE, Maxima GXE, Sentra and the Frontier pickup (including the new four-door V-6 crew cab) in Nissan's ready-to-tow line is the sporty Xterra XE SUV. The curb weight for the 2WD version is just over 3,500 pounds, and it can be towed when equipped with a manual transmission. Base retail price is \$17,599, going to \$21,000 for the V-6-powered 4WD model. Xterra shares Frontier's chassis platform; the body is bolted to a full frame. It also shares Frontier's engines: an aluminum four-valve-per-cylinder-head double overhead camshaft, a 143-hp four-cylinder and an aluminum-head single overhead camshaft 170-hp V-6 producing 200 lb-ft of torque.



# 2000 DINGHY GUIDE

## TOWABLE SUVS & PICKUPS

	BASE CURB WEIGHT	SPEED/DISTANCE LIMITS	MANUAL TRANS	AUTOMATIC TRANS	EPA MPG CITY/HWY	BASE RETAIL PRICE
<b>CHEVROLET/GMC</b>						
Tahoe/Yukon 4X4	3,848	55/NONE	NO	YES**	16/21	\$23,380
Full Size 4X4	4,561	55/NONE	YES***	YES***	14/16	\$19,032
Suburban/Yukon XL 4X4	5,297	55/NONE	YES***	YES***	14/18	\$28,375
Tracker 2-dr	2,339	55/200*	YES*	YES*	23/26	\$13,925
Tracker 4-dr	2,747	55/200*	YES*	YES*	23/26	\$15,150

\* With manual hubs only; after 200 miles, operate engine one minute with manual transmission in second, automatic transmission in drive.

\*\*Autotrac 4WD only. \*\*\*Autotrac or manual-shift transfer case only.

<b>DODGE</b>						
Dakota 4WD	3,831	NONE	YES	YES	20/24	\$17,030
Durango 4WD	4,360	NONE	N/A	YES	15/18	\$25,975
Ram 4WD	4,684	NONE	YES	YES	14/19	\$20,130

<b>FORD/MERCURY</b>						
Explorer	3,650	55/NONE	YES	NO	14/19	\$23,290
Explorer/Mountaineer 4WD	4,146	55/NONE	YES	YES**	15/19	\$25,170
F-150 4WD	4,299	55/NONE	YES*	YES*	15/19	\$18,505
Super Duty F-Series 4WD	5,195	55/NONE	YES	YES	14/18	\$24,230
Ranger	3,068	55/NONE	YES	NO	16/22	\$11,485
Ranger 4WD	3,408	55/NONE	YES	NO	15/20	\$15,825

\* With manual transfer case and center disconnect locked out by capping a front-axle vacuum motor line. See dealer for assistance.

\*\* Control-Trac 4x4 models must be equipped with factory Neutral Control Kit, part no. F672-7H332-AA.

<b>HONDA</b>						
CR-V	3,126	LEGAL/NONE	N/A	YES*	22/25	\$20,450

\* Only with prescribed towing procedure.

## Suzuki

The Sidekick's no longer in production, leaving Suzuki's towables at three cars and two SUVs: Esteem sedan/wagon plus the Swift hatchback and Vitara/Grand Vitara. The Vitara can be powered by either a four-cylinder single overhead camshaft, 16-valve, 1.6-liter engine or its dual overhead camshaft, 16-valve, 2.0-liter counterpart. The Grand Vitara has a dual overhead camshaft, 24-valve, 2.5-liter V-6 engine and a base curb weight of 3,064 pounds; the Vitara is 2,601 pounds. Both can be towed with automatic or manual transmissions. Suzuki was named among the top-12 environmentally friendly cars by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. The Swift looks to be the least expensive dinghy-towable car with a \$9,099 base retail price.



# 2000 DINGHY GUIDE

## TOWABLE SUVS & PICKUPS

	BASE CURB WEIGHT	SPEED/DISTANCE LIMITS	MANUAL TRANS	AUTOMATIC TRANS	EPA MPG CITY/HWY	BASE RETAIL PRICE
<b>JEEP</b>						
Cherokee 4WD	3,181	NONE	YES	YES	20/23	\$17,565
Grand Cherokee 4WD	3,955	NONE	YES	YES	16/21	\$27,965
Wrangler 4WD	3,094	NONE	YES	YES	16/19	\$14,460

<b>KIA</b>						
Sportage 2WD	3,352	55/400*	YES	NO	19/23	\$14,795
Sportage 4WD	3,230	55/400*	YES	NO	19/23	\$16,295

\* After 400 miles, operate engine for three to five minutes to lubricate transmission.

<b>MAZDA</b>						
2WD B-Series Pickup	3,025	55/NONE	YES	NO	20/25	\$11,345
4WD B-Series Pickup	3,433	55/NONE	YES*	YES*	15/20	\$17,660

\* With manual transfer case.

<b>NISSAN</b>						
Frontier Pickup 2WD	2,911	60/500	YES	NO	22/26	\$11,590
Frontier Pickup 4WD	3,433	60/500	YES**	NO	18/21	\$17,340
Pathfinder/QX4*** 4WD	3,920	60/200/500*	YES**	NO	16/18	\$28,399
Xterra XE	3,504	60/200/500*	YES**	NO	19/24	\$17,599

\* V-6 engine, 200-mile limit; 4-cylinder, 500-mile limit. Start engine to circulate transmission fluids when this limit is reached.

\*\* 4WD transfer case must be left in neutral. \*\*\*QX4 is built by Infiniti, a division of Nissan.

<b>SUBARU</b>						
Forester	3,190	NONE	YES	NO	21/27	\$20,095
Outback	3,265	NONE	YES	NO	21/27	\$22,695

<b>SUZUKI</b>						
Grand Vitara	3,064	55/200*	YES*	YES*	AUTO 21/24	\$17,999
Vitara	2,601	55/200*	YES*	YES*	AUTO 25/27	\$13,499

\* With manual hubs only; after 200 miles, operate engine 1 minute with manual transmission in second, automatic transmission in drive.

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Before you begin your dinghy search, you need to establish the exact weight of your motorhome, when ready for the road, and its gross combination weight rating (gcwr). All motorhome manufacturers specify a gcwr, and it may not be consistent with the chassis manufacturer's gcwr. If the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) weight label (posted in member-built motorhomes since September 1996) does not state the gcwr or it is not stated in the owner's manual, contact the coach manufacturer for towing capability. There are many factors that determine gcwr, and most manufacturers do not pass on towing capabilities currently being provided by chassis builders because of weight limits

imposed by specific class hitches and rear framing.

It's also important to determine the maximum unbraked towing limit for your particular chassis. Depending on the specifications, you may need to look into supplemental dinghy-braking systems.

Always read the owner's manual for official dinghy-towing information before buying any new or used vehicle that's going to be towed behind a motorhome. ■

*Data provided by vehicle manufacturers. Due to running changes in vehicle-platform technology, information at presstime sometimes is updated or changed later without notice, so verify all information prior to purchase.*

Chevrolet Cavalier Convertible

# 2000 DINGHY GUIDE — CORRECTIONS

## DINGHY-TOW CORRECTION

The following is corrected dinghy-towing information for GM and Toyota vehicles (see “2000 Dinghy Guide,” January):

The 2000-model Chevrolet Cavalier and Malibu, Oldsmobile Alero, Pontiac Grand Am and Sunfire equipped with Hydra-Matic 4T40-E or 4T45-E automatic transaxle (RPOs MN4 or MN5) or five-speed manual transaxle (RPOs MK7 or MJ1) are officially dinghy-towable. Complete data and towing procedures are included in the respective vehicles’ owner’s manuals. The maximum towing speed is 65 mph, distance unlimited.

The following Toyota 2000-model cars and sport-utility vehicles equipped with manual transmissions are dinghy-towable: Camry, Corolla, Celica GT and GT-S, Echo and RAV4 two-wheel-drive (2WD) and four-wheel-drive (4WD).

Toyota and Lexus also list the following 2000 vehicles with automatic transmissions as dinghy-towable: Celica GT-S, Lexus ES 300 and Lexus RX 300 2WD and 4WD. Manual-transmission vehicles have no speed or distance limits. Automatic-transmission models are limited to 55 mph, and after 200 miles the engine must be run at idle-speed for three minutes. Consult the owner’s manuals for specifics.