

MOTORHOME[®]

2004 Dinghy Towing Guide

MotorHome's latest
compilation of suitable
trucks, sport-utilities and cars

2004 Dinghy Towing Guide

TOWABLE CARS

Model	Base Curb Weight (lb)	Speed/Distance Limits	Manual Trans	Automatic Trans	Mileage City/Hwy	Base Retail
Chevrolet						
Cavalier Coupe	2,617	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 25/33 Auto: 24/32	\$14,045
Cavalier Sedan	2,676	65/None	Yes	Yes	24/32	\$14,245
Malibu	3,174	65/None	N/A	Yes	23/33	\$18,370
Malibu Maxx	3,458	65/None	N/A	Yes	21/29	\$22,255
DaimlerChrysler						
Neon	2,581	None	Yes	No	27/33	\$13,200
PT Cruiser	3,101	None	Yes	No	21/29	\$17,395
Sebring/GTC	3,357	None	Yes	No	22/30	\$20,855
Stratus Coupe	3,051	None	Yes	No	22/29	\$19,560
Ford						
Focus	2,612	None	Yes	No	27/36	\$12,725
Mustang	3,290	None	Yes	No	20/29	\$17,720
Hyundai						
Accent	2,255	Legal/None	Yes	No	29/33	\$9,999
Elantra	2,635	Legal/None	Yes	No	24/33	\$12,899
Sonata	3,181	Legal/None	Yes	No	22/30	\$17,999
Tiburon	2,940	Legal/None	Yes	No	23/31	\$16,249

■ JOEL R. DONALDSON

Representing the latest installment in the *MotorHome* knowledge base, our “2004 Dinghy Towing Guide” lists most of the cur-

rent-model-year vehicles that are manufacturer-approved for being towed four-down, with all wheels rolling.

As in past years, some popular dinghy vehicles continue to be conspicuous in their absence from this guide. Often this isn't due to any mechanical deficiency in the vehicle itself, but rather to the policy of its

manufacturer. Legal considerations, ground-clearance issues and concerns about how a tow-bar baseplate may affect the vehicle's structural integrity or crashworthiness are a few of the justifications cited. So, commit the following sentence to memory: If the vehicle isn't listed in this guide, the manufacturer *doesn't* sanction it for

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Infiniti						
G35 Sport Sedan	3,398	60/500 ¹	Yes	No	20/27	\$29,850
G35 Sport Coupe	3,435	60/500 ¹	Yes	No	20/27	\$32,450
<i>1. Idle engine in Neutral for several minutes every 500 miles.</i>						
Nissan						
350Z	3,188	60/500 ¹	Yes	No	20/26	\$26,910
Altima 2.5	3,001	60/500 ¹	Yes	No	23/29	\$16,850
Maxima	3,432	60/500 ¹	Yes	No	20/29	\$25,439
Sentra	2,513	60/500 ¹	Yes	No	28/36	\$12,639
<i>1. Idle engine in Neutral for several minutes every 500 miles.</i>						
Oldsmobile						
Alero GX Coupe	2,946	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 25/33 Auto: 24/32	\$18,200
Pontiac						
Grand Am SE	3,066	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 25/33 Auto: 24/32	\$17,070
Sunfire	2,771	65/None	Yes	Yes	Man: 24/33 Auto: 23/32	\$14,930
Vibe	2,701	None	Yes	No	29/36	\$16,485
Saturn						
ION Sedan	2,692	65/None	Yes	No	26/33	\$11,430
L300	3,033	65/None	N/A	Yes	24/33	\$18,345

dinghy service — no matter what the local dealer may tell you.

Some vehicles, on the other hand, are *conditionally approved* for dinghy service, contingent upon following certain procedures. For example, some models have electrical

accessories that operate whenever the steering column lock is disengaged, presenting a continuous drain on the battery if certain fuses aren't pulled before towing. Most vehicle handbooks cover the step-by-step procedures for removing the right fuses for

towing service, should this be required.

Obviously, transmission choice is a major factor in determining a vehicle's towability. While many manual transmissions are designed to keep their internal parts adequately lubed while towing, few automatics have

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Subaru						
Impreza 2.5 RS Sedan	2,965	None	Yes	No	21/28	\$19,395
Impreza 2.5 TS Wagon	3,045	None	Yes	No	21/28	\$17,895
Legacy L	3,255	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$20,695
Legacy L Wagon	3,350	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$21,795
Outback Sport	3,105	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$19,095
WRX	3,085	None	Yes	No	20/27	\$24,495
WRX Sport Wagon	3,165	None	Yes	No	20/27	\$23,995
Suzuki						
Aerio S/GS Sedan	2,676	55/200	Yes	No	25/31	\$12,999
Aerio SX Wagon	2,734	55/200	Yes	No	25/31	\$15,499
Toyota						
Camry LE	3,086	None	Yes	No	24/33	\$19,045
Celica GT	2,425	None	Yes	No	28/33	\$17,390
Celica GT-S	2,500	None	Yes	No	23/32	\$22,055
Corolla CE	2,570	None	Yes	No	32/40	\$13,570
Echo 2DR	2,035	None	Yes	No	35/43	\$10,245
Echo 4DR	2,055	None	Yes	No	35/43	\$10,775
Matrix 2WD	2,679	None	Yes	No	29/36	\$14,670
MR2 Spyder	2,195	None	Yes	N/A	26/32	\$24,645

the output-side lube pump required to make them safely towable for even the shortest of distances. Thus, the towability of many vehicles simply boils down to whether or not they are available with a manual transmission (and even some of these models still carry distance and/or maximum-speed restrictions).

Adding to the confusion, some four-wheel-drive (4WD) vehicles are dinghy-towable and yet their two-wheel-drive counterparts aren't, thanks to the presence of a transfer case that allows the driveshaft to

rotate without also spinning the transmission. However, a few automatic shift-on-the-fly 4WD systems defeat this capability; also, a couple of models require a dealer-supplied towing kit to make them dinghy-towable.

If your favorite dinghy vehicle isn't listed in this guide, don't despair: Aftermarket electric lube pumps are available to fit the transmissions or transaxles of many popular dinghy vehicles. Driveshaft disconnects also are available for some rear-wheel-drive models, while a few front-wheel-drive vehicles can be fitted with axle locks

that perform essentially the same function — namely, preventing the transmission or transaxle from rotating while the vehicle is being towed.

Another viable option is the tried-and-true tow dolly, which can accommodate all but a handful of vehicles equipped with full-time all-wheel drive. As a last resort, both open and enclosed car trailers are available from a wide variety of sources.

Ultimately, no matter what dinghy you choose, a towing solution exists for it (provided, of course, that your motorhome's weight and brak-

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TOWABLE SUVS & PICKUPS

Model	Base Curb Weight (lb)	Speed/Distance Limits	Manual Trans	Automatic Trans	Mileage City/Hwy	Base Retail
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Acura

MDX	4,420	65/None ¹	N/A	Yes	17/23	\$35,700
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1. Recirculate transmission fluid every eight towing hours.

Buick

Rainier	4,417	None	N/A	Yes	16/21	\$35,295
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Chevrolet/GMC

Avalanche 4WD	5,678	None	N/A	Yes	13/17	\$33,100
Blazer 2DR 4WD	3,866	None	Yes	Yes	15/21	\$23,745
Colorado/Canyon 4WD	3,623	None	Yes	Yes	N/A	\$19,855
Envoy/TrailBlazer 4WD	4,612	None	N/A	Yes	15/21	\$31,095
Envoy XL/ TrailBlazer EXT 4WD	4,954	None	N/A	Yes	15/20	\$33,195
Silverado/ Sierra1500 4WD	4,439	None	Yes	Yes	15/18	\$23,095
Suburban/ Yukon XL 4WD	5,219/5,567	None	N/A	Yes	13/17	\$39,850
Tahoe/Yukon 4WD	5,050/5,269	None	N/A	Yes	14/18	\$37,000
Tracker 4DR 4WD	2,987	55/200 ¹	Yes	Yes	22/25	\$20,880

1. Recirculate transfer-case oil every 200 miles.

Dodge

Dakota 4WD	3,994	None	Yes	Yes	16/22	\$20,120
Durango 4WD	4,671	None	N/A	Yes	est 15/19	est \$28,000
Ram 4WD	4,863	None	Yes	Yes	13/18	\$23,330

ing capabilities and gross combination weight rating aren't exceeded).

Speaking of weight: Since many RV enthusiasts shop for a new vehicle with an eye toward towing it behind a motorhome, this guide includes the approximate curb weights (without options) of all towable models. Suggested retail prices for each model also

are included, generally listing the least-expensive trim level that is towable.

Lastly, a few words about remotely actuated brakes on dinghy vehicles: Use 'em if you've got 'em. Most Canadian provinces, in fact, now require such brakes. Stateside, legal requirements are more opaque; at present, most states have laws on

the books regulating towed trailers, but not specifically towed vehicles.

Before you head for the open road with dinghy in tow, it is strongly suggested that you check with your local Department of Motor Vehicles office regarding the regulations in your state — as well as states through which you plan to travel.

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Ford						
Escape 2WD	3,019	55/None	Yes	No	23/28	\$18,710
Escape 4WD	3,175	55/None	Yes	No	18/23	\$21,925
Explorer 4D 4WD	4,469	55/None	N/A	Yes ²	15/19	\$29,025
Explorer Sport 2WD	3,963	55/None	Yes	No	17/22	\$22,515
Explorer Sport 4WD	4,088	55/None	Yes	Yes ¹	15/19	\$24,890
Explorer Sport Trac 2WD	4,135	55/None	Yes	No	17/21	\$23,045
Explorer Sport Trac 4WD	4,349	55/None	Yes	Yes ¹	15/20	\$25,815
F-150 4WD	5,087	55/None	Yes ³	Yes ³	15/19	\$24,555
F-150 Heritage 4WD	3,990	55/None	Yes ^{3,4}	Yes ^{3,4}	15/19	\$22,465
F-250/350 SD 4WD	5,828	55/None	Yes ³	Yes ³	13/17	\$24,720
Ranger 2WD	3,028	55/None	Yes	No	22/26	\$13,765
Ranger 4WD	3,464	55/None	Yes	No	17/21	\$20,135

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.

4. Requires locking out the center disconnect by capping off one front-axle vacuum motor line.

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

Honda

CR-V FWD/AWD	3,201	Legal/None	Yes	Yes ¹	23/28	\$18,900
Element FWD/AWD	3,352	Legal/None	Yes	Yes ¹	21/25	\$16,100
Pilot	4,416	65/None	NA	Yes ²	17/22	\$27,100

1. With prescribed towing procedure.

2. Recirculate transmission fluid every eight towing hours.

Hummer

H2	6,400	None	NA	Yes	11/13	\$49,180
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Hyundai

Santa Fe FWD 4-cyl.	3,494	Legal/None	Yes	No	20/27	\$17,999
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Isuzu						
Ascender 4WD	4,967	Legal/None	N/A	Yes	15/20	\$31,199
Jeep						
Grand Cherokee 4WD	3,989	None	N/A	Yes	15/20	\$29,230
Liberty 4WD	3,826	None	Yes	Yes	20/24	\$19,570
Wrangler	3,235	None	Yes	Yes	19/20	\$16,270
Kia						
Sorento 2WD	4,112	55/400	Yes ¹	N/A	16/19	\$18,995
Sorento 4WD	4,317	55/400	Yes ¹	N/A	15/20	\$24,850
1. Idle engine for several minutes every 400 towing miles.						
Land Rover						
Discovery 4.6	4,619	None	N/A	Yes	12/16	\$34,350
Range Rover	5,379	None	N/A	Yes	12/17	\$71,200
Mazda						
B-Series 2WD	3,060	55/None	Yes	No	22/26	\$14,220
B-Series 4WD	3,820	55/None	Yes	Yes ¹	17/21	\$20,230
Tribute DX FWD	3,091	55/None	Yes	No	23/28	\$18,625
1. With manual transfer case.						
Nissan						
Frontier 2WD	3,240	60/500 ¹	Yes	No	22/25	\$13,149
Frontier 4WD	3,932	60/500 ¹	Yes ²	No	17/20	\$18,939
Pathfinder SE 4WD	3,975	60/500 ¹	Yes ²	No	16/19	\$28,799
Xterra 4WD	4,046	60/500 ¹	Yes ²	No	16/20	\$22,399
1. Idle engine in Neutral for several minutes every 500 miles.						
2. Tow with 4WD transfer case in Neutral.						

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Saturn

VUE	3,179	65/None	Yes	Both	23/28	\$17,125
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Scion

xA ¹	2,335	55/200 ²	Yes	No	31/37	\$12,965
xB ¹	2,425	55/200 ²	Yes	No	30/33	\$14,165

1. Sold only in California.

2. Idle engine for three minutes every 200 miles.

Subaru

Baja	3,485	None	Yes	No	20/25	\$23,995
Forester 2.5X	3,090	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$20,895
Outback Wagon	3,430	None	Yes	No	21/27	\$23,345

Suzuki

Grand Vitara 4WD	3,230	55/200	Yes ¹	Yes ²	19/22	\$18,899
Vitara 4WD	3,020	55/200	Yes ¹	Yes ²	19/22	\$17,499
XL-7 4WD	3,704	55/200	N/A	Yes ²	17/22	\$21,899

1. Rev engine every 200 miles with transfer case in Neutral, transmission in Second gear.

2. Tow with transmission in Park. Idle engine every 200 miles with transfer case in Neutral, transmission in Drive.

Toyota

RAV4 2WD	2,897	None	Yes	No	24/30	\$18,350
RAV4 4WD	2,965	55/200 ¹	Yes	No	21/26	\$20,800

1. Idle engine for three minutes every 200 miles.

Fine points of the law, however, should not dissuade you from adding a system that, by all accounts, increases the safety quotient of your dinghy *and* motorhome. A wide variety of aftermarket dinghy-vehicle brake systems are available, so buyers have a lot to choose from (and prices vary widely).

Every effort has been made to

ensure the accuracy of this guide; updates and corrections may be made to the online version as they become available. However, since both production-line and policy changes are not unheard of, the owner's manual should be your ultimate source for resolving questions about the towability of a particular vehicle. Read it *before* you buy. ■

Considering the purchase of a used late-model car or truck, but first want to ascertain its capability as a dinghy? Guides for earlier model years are available online at motorhomemagazine.com, or they can be ordered as reprints by calling (805) 667-4366.