

# Dinghy Towing Guide

A quick look at the 1997 crop  
of flat-towable vehicles

PRESTON GRATIOT



PONTIAC SUNFIRE

KIA SPORTAGE



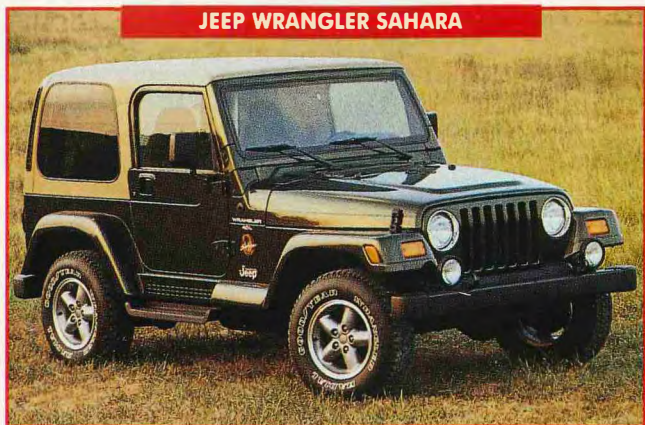
DODGE DAKOTA 4X4





## DINGHY TOWING GUIDE

**JEEP WRANGLER SAHARA**



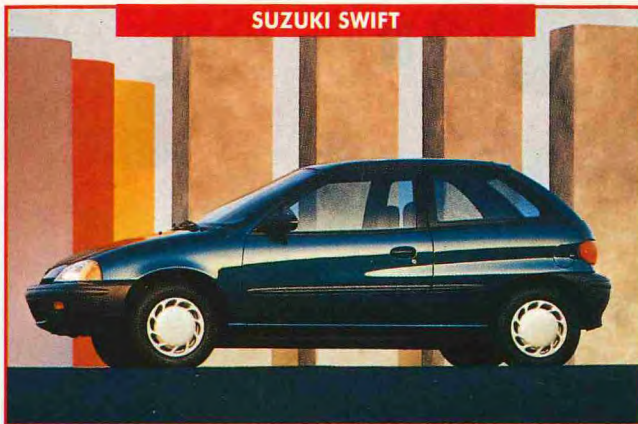
**SATURN (L-R): SL2, SC2, SW2**



**CHEVROLET MALIBU SEDAN**



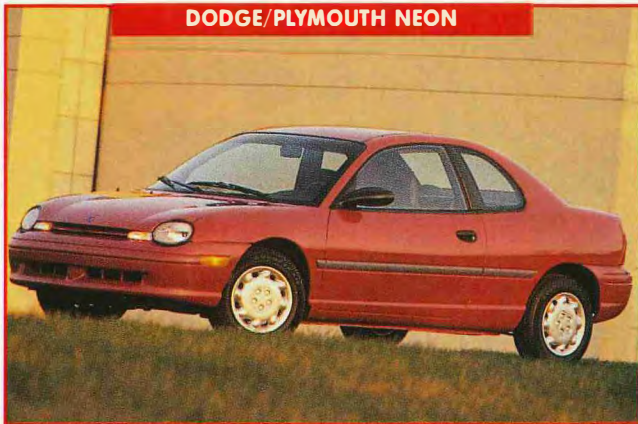
**SUZUKI SWIFT**



**FORD EXPLORER**



**DODGE/PLYMOUTH NEON**



**Y**et another passenger car, the midsize Chevrolet Malibu, has been added to the list of vehicles equipped with automatic transmissions that are dinghy-towable on their own wheels. For sev-

eral years, Saturn was the only manufacturer officially approving automatic-transmission passenger cars for flat towing, but Chevy and Pontiac entered the fray last year by approving Cavaliers and Sunfires with four-speed automatics.

The 1997 Malibu, which can be

towed with a four-speed automatic, has been designed to compete in the rapidly growing midsize marketplace. With more head-, shoulder- and hip room front and rear than the Cavalier, the Malibu also offers more cargo capacity (13.4 versus 16.4 cubic feet). Standard equipment includes



# DINGHY TOWING GUIDE

## TOWABLE CARS

VEHICLE	BASE CURB WEIGHT	SPEED/DISTANCE LIMITS	TOWABLE W/MANUAL TRANS	TOWABLE W/AUTO TRANS	EPA MPG CITY/HWY	BASE RETAIL PRICE
<b>CHEVROLET</b>						
Cavalier	2,617	none	yes	yes*	25/37	\$11,480
Malibu	3,100	none	none	yes*	24/38	\$15,995
<i>*With 4-speed automatic</i>						
<b>DODGE/PLYMOUTH</b>						
Neon 2-dr	2,385	none	yes	no	28/38	\$10,395
Neon 4-dr	2,428	none	yes	no	28/38	\$10,595
<b>FORD/MERCURY</b>						
Aspire	2,056	55/none	yes	no	34/42	\$ 9,530
Contour/Mystique	2,769	55/none	yes	no	24/34	\$13,995
Escort	2,457	65/none	yes	no	28/37	\$11,430
Probe	2,690	55/none	yes	no	26/33	\$14,680
Tracer	2,457	55/none	yes	no	28/37	\$11,560
<b>GEO</b>						
Metro	1,832	55/none	yes	no	44/49	\$ 8,580
<b>HYUNDAI</b>						
Accent	2,101	legal/none	yes	no	28/37	\$ 8,599
Elantra	2,458	legal/none	yes	no	24/32	\$11,099
Sonata	2,935	legal/none	yes	no	21/28	\$14,749
Tiburon	2,566	legal/none	yes	no	22/30	\$13,499
<b>MITSUBISHI</b>						
Mirage	2,127	none	yes	no	36/40	\$10,440
<b>NISSAN</b>						
200SX	2,330	70/500	yes	no	30/39	\$12,999
240SX	2,800	70/500	yes	no	22/28	\$18,359
Altima	2,853	70/500	yes	no	24/30	\$15,849
Maxima	3,001	70/500	yes	no	22/27	\$21,499
Sentra	2,315	70/500	yes	no	30/40	\$11,499
<b>PONTIAC</b>						
Grand Am	2,835	55/none	yes	no	22/33	\$15,159
Sunfire	2,627	55/none	yes	yes	25/37	\$12,559
<b>SATURN</b>						
SC-series	2,309	65/none	yes	yes	manual 28/40 auto 27/37	\$12,795
SL-series	2,321	65/none	yes	yes	manual 28/40 auto 27/37	\$10,995
SW-series	2,390	65/none	yes	yes	manual 28/37 auto 27/34	\$12,595
<b>SUZUKI</b>						
Swift Hatchback	1,878	55/none	yes	no	39/43	\$ 9,359

the flat-towable 4T40-E electronically controlled automatic transmission, air-conditioning and four-wheel anti-lock brake system (ABS).

Most manufacturers prohibit towing their automatic-transmission vehicles on their own wheels except four-wheel-drive (4WD) models

whose transfer cases can be shifted into neutral to prevent transmission damage. In contrast, the four GM models are officially approved because the 4T40-E electronically controlled transmission was specifically designed from its inception to be flat towable, a notable effort on the part

of GM to address the needs of RV-minded customers.

All of the 1997 model-year vehicles listed in these pages have been approved by their manufacturers for towing with all four wheels on the ground. Some cars and trucks not listed here (not approved) are flat-towed

# TOWABLE SPORT-UTILITIES AND PICKUPS

VEHICLE	BASE CURB WEIGHT	SPEED/DISTANCE LIMITS	TOWABLE W/MANUAL TRANS	TOWABLE W/AUTO TRANS	EPA MPG CITY/HWY	BASE RETAIL PRICE
<b>CHEVROLET</b>						
Blazer 4WD	3,814	none	yes*	yes*	16/21	\$21,204
S-10 4WD	3,356	none	yes*	yes*	16/21	\$15,710
* With manual transfer case						
<b>DODGE</b>						
Dakota	3,767	none	yes*	yes*	15/19	\$17,190
Ram	4,525	none	yes*	yes*	13/17	\$19,005
* With 4WD only						
<b>FORD</b>						
Expedition 4WD	4,829	55/none	yes*	yes*	14/18	\$27,910
Explorer 2WD	3,707	55/none	yes	no	18/23	\$20,610
Explorer 4WD	3,931	55/none	yes**	yes**	16/20	\$22,575
F-Series 4WD	4,135	55/none	yes*	yes*	16/20	\$18,585
Mountaineer	3,930	55/none	n/a	yes**	14/18	\$27,765
Ranger 2WD	2,970	55/none	yes	no	22/27	\$11,380
Ranger 4WD	3,410	55/none	yes*	yes*	20/25	\$16,775
* With manual transfer case. **With electric (dealer-activated program required) or manual transfer case.						
<b>GEO</b>						
Tracker 2-dr	2,339	55/200*	yes*	yes*	24/26	\$13,310
Tracker 4-dr	2,619	55/200*	yes*	yes*	24/26	\$15,660
* With manual hubs only; after 200 miles, operate engine one minute with manual transmission in second, automatic transmission in drive.						
<b>GMC</b>						
Jimmy 4WD 2-dr	3,815	none	yes*	yes*	17/22	\$22,362
Jimmy 4WD 4-dr	4,013	none	yes*	yes*	17/22	\$24,362
Sonoma 4WD	3,469	none	yes*	yes*	17/22	\$16,367
*With manual transfer case						
<b>JEEP</b>						
Cherokee	3,111	none	yes*	yes*	19/22	**\$16,160
Grand Cherokee	3,785	none	yes*	yes*	15/20	\$27,515
Wrangler	3,229	none	yes*	yes*	19/21	\$13,470
*With 4WD only **'96 Price						
<b>KIA</b>						
Sportage 2WD	3,069	55/400*	yes*	no	19/23	\$14,495
Sportage 4WD	3,280	55/400*	yes*	no	20/24	\$15,995
*After 400 miles, operate engine for 3-5 minutes to lubricate transmission.						
<b>MAZDA</b>						
2WD B-Series Pickup	2,927	55/none	yes	no	25/28	\$10,370
4WD B-Series Pickup	3,242	55/none	yes*	yes*	22/26	\$16,265
*With manual transfer case						
<b>NISSAN</b>						
Pathfinder	3,675	60/200/500*	yes**	no	17/20	\$22,899
Pickup 2WD	2,815	60/500	yes	no	21/26	\$10,999
Pickup 4WD	3,395	60/500	yes**	no	17/20	\$16,199
* V-6 engine: 200-mile limit; 4-cylinder: 500-mile limit. Start engine to circulate transmission fluids when this limit is reached.						
** Transfer case must be left in 2H, transmission in neutral.						
<b>SUZUKI</b>						
Sidekick 2-dr 4WD	2,546	55/200*	yes*	yes*	manual 23/26 auto 23/24	\$15,069
Sidekick 4-dr 4WD	2,756	55/200*	yes*	yes*	manual 23/26 auto 22/25	\$16,419
Sidekick Sport 4WD	2,954	55/200*	yes*	yes*	manual 22/25 auto 21/24	\$18,119
X-90 SUV 4WD	2,500	55/200*	yes*	yes*	manual 25/28 auto 23/27	\$14,979
* With manual hubs only; after 200 miles, operate engine one minute with manual transmission in second, automatic transmission in drive.						

continued on page 112



## Like Choices?

36th  
YEAR



Garage kit!

### You'll Love SPORTSMOBILE

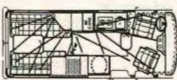
#### FACTORY DIRECT TO YOU

This way you work directly with a knowledgeable Sportmobile designer in planning your van motorhome with our van planner, just the way you want it. And it doesn't cost any more. Or select from over 40 standard plans. 4X4s also available. Sportmobile — second home / second car.

#### WE'RE KNOWN FOR QUALITY

No one builds them better, safer or with more innovations.

STARCOOL AIR CONDITIONER  
Cools front and rear when driving (12V) and parked (110V). Requires minimum interior space 12,000 BTU. R-134A ozone friendly. Patented system exclusive to Sportmobile. A most popular option.



SEND TODAY FOR COMPLETE INFO. PKG / PRICES

## Sportmobile

#### MANUFACTURING & SALES

■ AUSTIN, TX - 9805M Gray Blvd. 78758  
■ CLOVIS, CA - 425M N. Minnewawa 93611  
■ HUNTINGTON, IN - 250M Court 46750

## DINGHY TOWING GUIDE

continued from page 48

with no damage, and owners of these cars will tell you that "everyone does it." But unless flat-towing for long distances at highway speeds is specifically approved in the vehicle owner's manual, drivetrain warranty coverage may be denied if damage can be attributed to dinghy towing.

For those vehicles not approved for flat towing, a number of aftermarket devices can be used to make just about anything towable. Some of these aftermarket add-ons include drive-shaft disconnects, drive-axle disconnects or lubrication pumps, but one of the most common methods is to put the drive wheels on a trailer, either a full-length trailer or a tow dolly. Tow dollies are two-wheeled platforms that cradle the drive wheels of the vehicle being towed and allow tag-along transportation without risk of drivetrain damage. Most all-wheel-drive models must be towed with all fours on a trailer.

These listings pertain only to 1997 model-year vehicles. MOTORHOME's "Dinghy Towing Guide" has been published annually since 1990, and photocopies of prior guides are available; call (805) 667-4366 for information.

### GENERAL MOTORS

The General continues to be the only manufacturer offering passenger cars and even true convertibles with automatics as towable dinghies (check out the bright-red Pontiac Sunfire photo at the beginning of this article) with the Cavalier and Sunfire leading the "rag-top" brigade once more. The new '97 Chevrolet Malibu is also cleared for flat-towing. All Saturn sedans, hardtops and station wagons continue to be towable with automatics or manual gearboxes.

### CHRYSLER CORPORATION

With the return of the new Jeep Wrangler, Chrysler Corporation offsets the demise of the Eagle-brand towable, the Summit, leaving only the Neon to carry the passenger car towable banner. Jeep's new open-air contender features a total redesign, but sticks with the trusted drivetrains

from the prior version. Cosmetically redesigned for '97 is the rounded-off Cherokee. The Cherokee has an extensive list of options, making this one of the most versatile Jeeps ever offered.

Both the stylish new Dakota and the full-size Ram can be flat-towed when ordered with 4WD, although the full-size truck is quite heavy for towing. The new "Baby Ram" look is the first major design change in the Dakota since its introduction as a 1987 model.

### FORD/MERCURY

Big news this year for Ford, and we do mean *big*, is the introduction of the Expedition. This brings Ford Motor Company to the towable table with 10 model offerings, including five passenger cars and five sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) and trucks. However, if you want to tow a Ford with an automatic transmission, you still have to look to a properly equipped 4WD pickup or SUV. The latest F-Series pickups can also be flat-towed when ordered with 4WD and the manual transfer case, although they are quite heavy.

### KIA

Kia's compact SUV, the popular Sportage, continues into its second year of production. Both the 2WD and the 4WD versions are towable when ordered with the manual transmission.

### NISSAN

Nissan stipulates a distance limit on flat-towing its manual transmission-equipped cars and trucks. When this mileage is reached (500 miles for vehicles equipped with four-cylinder engines and 200 miles for vehicles equipped with manually shifted V-6 engines), the engine should be started and allowed to run for a few minutes to help ensure proper lubrication of the transmission.

### IN CLOSING

Regardless of which brand or model you prefer, be sure that you

## Newmar Corp.

An American Tradition of Excellence



Mountain Aire

### Newmar's MIDWEST CONNECTION

THE BEST DEALS, THE  
BEST SERVICE! CALL US  
BEFORE YOU BUY!

1-800-951-3204

FAX (515) 948-3205

## STENZEL'S CAMPER'S

4701 HWY 169, Elmore, MN 56027

• 13 miles south of I-90 on HWY 169 •



## DINGHY TOWING GUIDE

see in writing that the vehicle is towable with the equipment and options you intend to purchase. Follow procedures recommended by the manufacturer. To determine how much your motorhome is rated to tow, subtract the actual loaded weight of your coach (including water, fuel, supplies and passengers) from the manufacturer's gross combination weight rating (gcwr).

Some chassis manufacturers specify a maximum weight that may be towed without a separate braking system for the towed vehicle. A few motorhomers were ticketed last summer in British Columbia, Canada, for not having brakes and breakaway stopping systems on their dinghy vehicles. Automatic Equipment (402-385-3051), P&E Industries Incorporated (531-395-3100), Remco (800-228-2481) and Roadmaster (800-669-9690) offer towed-vehicle braking systems that use the brakes on the dinghy to help stop the motorhome-and-dinghy combination. We will present new developments on these systems as they occur. ■



**Do You  
Have  
Money  
to  
Burn?**

If you are not a Good Sam Club member you can be losing money and missing out on some great benefits that can give you discounts, low-cost Emergency Road Service, vehicle and medical insurance plans, financing, or FREE services and much more!

If you'd like more information about membership in the Good Sam Club call toll-free

**1-800-234-3450**



## Quiet Time

Brought to you by Trace Engineering

Getting away from it all no longer means leaving behind the conveniences of home, or dealing with the fumes, noise and hassles of the generator. Just turn on the microwave, TV, stereo or any other appliance and your Trace inverter quietly and automatically comes to life, providing all the power needed from your battery bank. Mother Nature will thank you.

**TRACE  
ENGINEERING**

5916 - 195th N.E. • Arlington, Washington 98223 • U.S.A.  
(360) 435-8826 Fax: (360) 435-2229

Trace Engineering, Circle 157 on Reader Service Card

*We have thousands of sales persons selling*

## LAZY DAZE ... Our Customers!

SOLD FROM FACTORY ONLY-NO DEALERS-37TH YEAR

**Stop by our factory and treat yourself to a factory tour. Test drive a 22', 26½', or the ALL NEW 30' of your choice. Or, request a brochure.**

## LAZY DAZE

4303-C E. Mission Blvd.  
Pomona, CA 91766  
(909) 627-1103  
Outside Calif. call  
(800) 578-1103