

# 1999 Dinghy Towing Guide



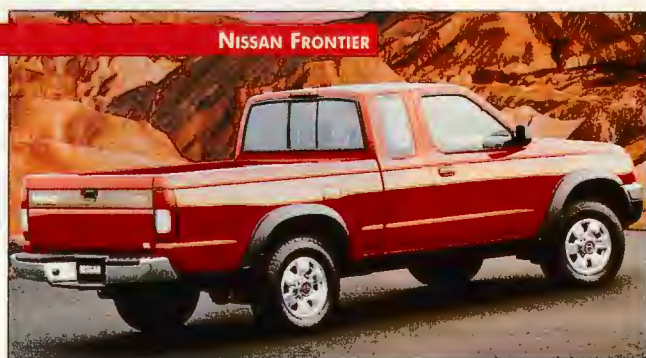
CHEVROLET TRACKER



FORD EXPLORER



MITSUBISHI MIRAGE COUPE LS



NISSAN FRONTIER



JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE LAREDO (TOP)  
JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE LIMITED (BOTTOM)

Oldsmobile and Suzuki add to the growing list of suitable vehicles, while hot competition leads to the lowering of some base prices

DOUG MARION



OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS GLS SEDAN



SATURN SL2



SUBARU FORESTER



SUZUKI GRAND VITARA



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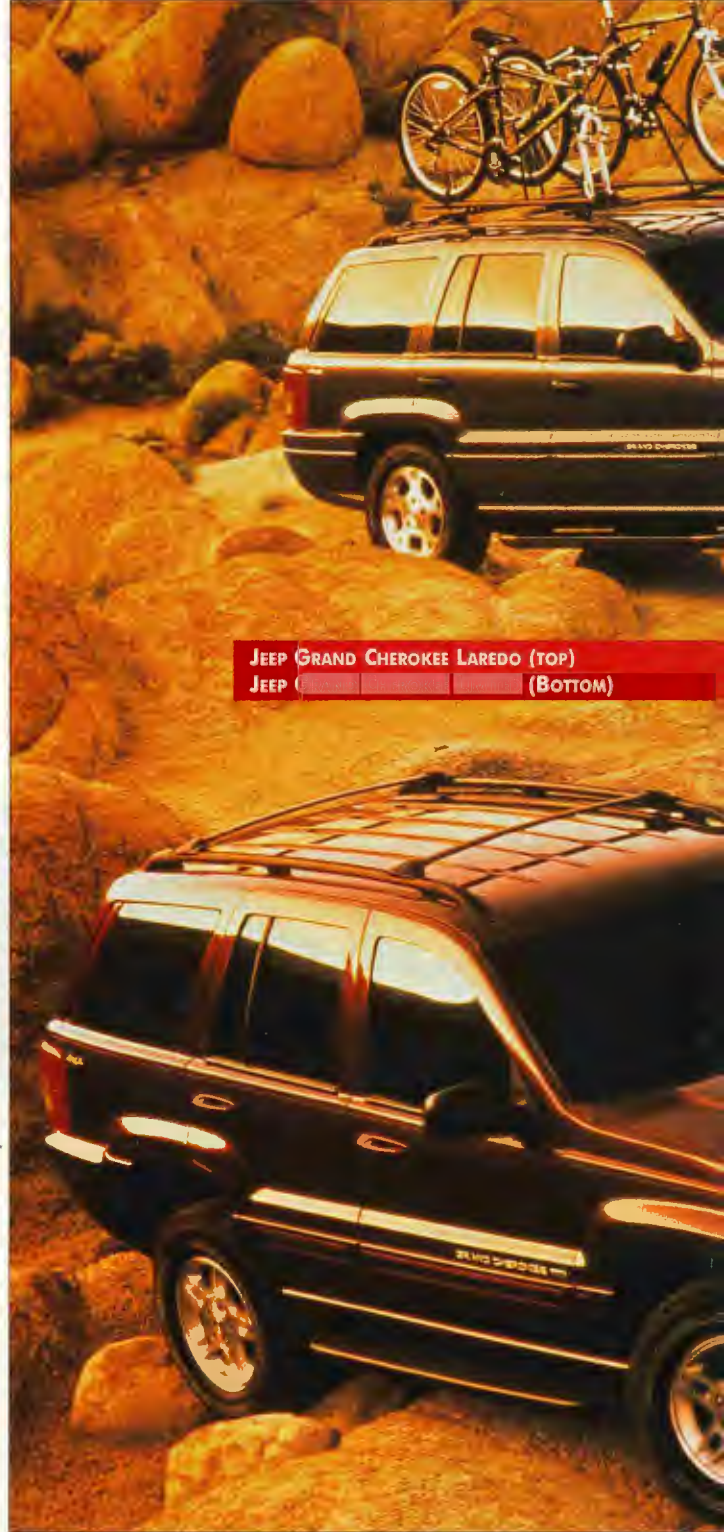
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## TOWABLE CARS

	BASE CURB WEIGHT	SPEED/DISTANCE LIMITS	TOWABLE W/MANUAL TRANS	TOWABLE W/AUTO TRANS	EPA MPG CITY/HWY	BASE RETAIL PRICE
<b>CHEVROLET</b>						
<b>Cavalier Coupe</b>	2,584	55/NONE	YES	YES*	25/37	\$11,871
<b>Malibu</b>	3,100	55/NONE	N/A	YES*	23/32	\$15,950
<b>Metro</b>	1,895	55/NONE	YES	NO	44/49	\$ 8,755
* With 4-speed automatic.						
<b>DODGE/PLYMOUTH</b>						
<b>Neon 2-dr</b>	2,470	NONE	YES	NO	29/39	\$11,520
<b>Neon 4-dr</b>	2,507	NONE	YES	NO	29/39	\$11,720
<b>FORD/MERCURY</b>						
<b>Contour/Mystique</b>	2,774	55/NONE	YES	NO	24/32	\$14,460
<b>Escort/Tracer</b>	2,468	NONE	YES	NO	25/34	\$11,455
<i>Prices and weights shown are for Ford versions; Mercury versions are similar.</i>						
<b>HYUNDAI</b>						
<b>Accent</b>	2,101	LEGAL/NONE	YES	NO	28/37	\$ 9,899
<b>Elantra</b>	2,458	LEGAL/NONE	YES	NO	24/32	\$11,499
<b>Tiburon</b>	2,566	LEGAL/NONE	YES	NO	24/32	\$13,599
<b>MITSUBISHI</b>						
<b>Mirage</b>	2,125	NONE	YES	NO	33/40	\$10,830
<b>NISSAN</b>						
<b>Altima XE</b>	2,859	70/500	YES	NO	24/31	\$14,990
<b>Maxima GXE</b>	3,012	70/500	YES	NO	22/27	\$21,499
<b>Sentra</b>	2,315	70/500	YES	NO	30/40	\$11,499

**G**lancing at the list of towable vehicles reveals a few more entries to a fairly healthy list of cars, sport-utilities and pickups suitable for towing behind motorhomes on all four wheels—without drivetrain modifications. Determining suitability is a complex proposition. Many manufacturers shy away from dinghy towing, citing the issue as purely one that must be handled by their legal departments. Other builders specify particular models as towable while other models, often similar in design, are nixed. While this may seem surprising to the layman, auto manufacturers have solid mechanical reasons why certain models cannot be towed on all four wheels.

Many times, the lubrication pumps in automatic transmissions circulate fluid only while the engine is running. That being the case, if the vehicle is towed without the engine running, the internal transmission components rotate but there's no fluid to lubricate the shafts, bearings, clutches and gears. Extensive internal

damage may result in expensive repairs.

Some four-wheel-drive (4WD) vehicles have a transfer case that, when shifted into neutral, keeps the automatic transmission output shaft idle. Unfortunately, the trend today is toward transfer cases that lack a neutral position, especially among the more expensive vehicles utilizing electronic controls. These same vehicles—usually sport-utilities—rarely are equipped with a manual transmission, which is a means of circumventing this problem.

On a brighter note, aftermarket equipment is available for most vehicles to permit reliable four-wheels-down towing. Electrically operated lubrication pumps can be installed in most vehicles. Driveshaft and drive-axle disconnects can also be fitted to a number of specific vehicles.

## GENERAL MOTORS

For 1999, GM continues to be the only manufacturer that offers "towable" automatic transmissions in some of its car models, including the Pontiac Sunfire, Chevrolet Cav-

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<b>OLDSMOBILE</b>						
<b>Cutlass</b>	3,102	65/NONE	N/A	YES	20/29	\$18,115
<b>PONTIAC</b>						
<b>Sunfire Coupe</b>	2,630	55/NONE	YES	YES	24/34	\$12,745
<b>SATURN</b>						
<b>SC Series</b>	2,308	65/NONE	YES	YES	MANUAL 28/39 AUTO 27/37	\$11,945
<b>SL Series</b>	2,326	65/NONE	YES	YES	MANUAL 28/39 AUTO 27/37	\$10,595
<b>SW Series</b>	2,392	65/NONE	YES	YES	MANUAL 27/37 AUTO 27/34	\$12,295
<b>SUBARU</b>						
<b>Impreza L Sedan</b>	2,690	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$15,895
<b>Impreza L Wagon</b>	2,795	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$16,295
<b>Impreza Outback Sport</b>	2,835	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$17,995
<b>Legacy L</b>	2,885	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$19,195
<b>Legacy Brighton Wagon</b>	2,905	NONE	YES	NO	23/30	\$16,895
<b>SUZUKI</b>						
<b>Esteem Sedan</b>	2,227	55/NONE	YES	NO	27/33	\$12,199
<b>Esteem Wagon</b>	2,284	55/NONE	YES	NO	27/33	\$12,699
<b>Swift Hatchback</b>	1,895	55/NONE	YES	NO	39/43	\$ 9,099

alier and Malibu, and all nonelectric Saturn products. The 3,102-pound midsize Oldsmobile Cutlass (curb weight is 2 pounds more than the Chevy Malibu) is also four-wheels-down towable for 1999.

### CHRYSLER CORPORATION

In the top five least-cost towables, the stylish Neon continues to be a popular dinghy vehicle. Dodge's Durango 4WD sport-utility vehicle (SUV) is still a sought-after towable, although its 4,500-pound curb weight is a hefty figure for many motorhomes. Its NV 231 part-time transfer case has a manually activated neutral position that allows towing on all fours for unlimited distances.

### FORD

The Contour/Mystique and Escort/Tracer cars are, at presstime, the only towable Ford automobiles. The Contour and Mystique are positioned as midsize cars. The Escort and Tracer are available in sedan and station-wagon versions.

As for pickup trucks, properly optioned F-150,

Ranger and Explorer models remain viable dinghies (electronic reprogramming by the dealer may be required for certain 4WD models). At presstime, the 4WD V-6 Ranger can be towed up to 55 mph with the electronic transfer-case control.

### HONDA

The CR-V continues to be the only Honda that can be towed on all four wheels with the company's blessing, as reported in the June '97 issue. It features a specially engineered under-frame and suspension that can handle towing hardware with few or no modifications. The CR-V has a 4,165-pound gross vehicle weight rating (gvwr).

Prior to towing, Honda requires that the user perform a gear shift from Drive/4 to Neutral before shutting off the engine. This leaves the transmission in a mode that prevents damage while being towed (as opposed to a final reverse-to-neutral shift, which can lead to a severely damaged transmission). This mechanical precaution is similar to the one that's been prescribed for other automatic-equipped Honda vehicles for several years.



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## TOWABLE SPORT-UTILITIES & PICKUPS

	BASE CURB WEIGHT	SPEED/DISTANCE LIMITS	TOWABLE W/MANUAL TRANS	TOWABLE W/AUTO TRANS	EPA MPG CITY/HWY	BASE RETAIL PRICE
<b>CHEVROLET/GMC</b>						
<b>Blazer/Yukon 4X4</b>	3,848	55/NONE	NO	YES**	16/21	\$26,500
<b>Full Size 4X4</b>	4,561	55/NONE	YES***	YES***	14/16	\$18,470
<b>Suburban/Tahoe 4X4</b>	5,297	55/NONE	YES***	YES***	14/18	\$28,619
<b>Tracker 2-dr</b>	2,339	55/200*	YES*	YES*	23/26	\$13,655
<b>Tracker 4-dr</b>	2,747	55/200*	YES*	YES*	23/26	\$14,860
* 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>						
<b>Dakota</b>	3,508	NONE	YES*	YES*	20/25	\$13,260
<b>Durango</b>	4,568	NONE	N/A	YES	15/18	\$25,265
<b>Ram</b>	4,640	NONE	YES*	YES*	14/19	\$14,695
*With 4WD only.						
<b>FORD/MERCURY</b>						
<b>Explorer</b>	3,911	55/NONE	YES	NO	14/19	\$21,840
<b>Explorer 4WD</b>	4,146	55/NONE	YES**	YES**	15/19	\$23,720
<b>F-Series 4WD</b>	4,260	55/NONE	YES*	YES*	15/19	\$18,265
<b>Ranger 4WD</b>	3,626	55/NONE	YES	NO	15/20	\$15,665
* With manual transfer case and center disconnect locked out by capping a front-axle vacuum motor line.						
** With electric (dealer-activated program required) or manual transfer case.						
<b>HONDA</b>						
<b>CR-V</b>	3,146	LEGAL/NONE	N/A	YES*	22/25	\$18,350
* Only with prescribed towing procedure.						
<b>JEEP</b>						
<b>Cherokee</b>	2,979	NONE	YES*	YES*	20/23	\$15,880
<b>Grand Cherokee</b>	3,621	NONE	YES*	YES*	16/21	\$25,695
<b>Wrangler</b>	3,045	NONE	YES*	YES*	19/21	\$14,280
* With 4WD only.						

### HYUNDAI

According to information received from Hyundai Motor America, all of its manual-transmission vehicles except the Sonata are approved for dinghy towing on all fours this year. The Elantra is available in both sedan and station-wagon versions.

### KIA

The lightweight Sportage, a low-priced SUV, continues to be sanctioned for towing by motorhomes. According to the manufacturer, base retail prices for Sportage models have decreased in 1999.

### NISSAN

Nissan's Frontier compact pickup and Pathfinder SUV are both approved for dinghy service. The Maxima model continues to be the company's only midsize passenger car that's towable when equipped with a five-speed manual transmission—an interesting blend of sportiness and creature comfort.

### SUBARU

All Legacy, Impreza, Outback and Forester manual-transmission models dating back to 1990 also are dinghy-towable, according to Subaru. No special speed or distance requirements are specified. Note that these vehicles are all-

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<b>KIA</b>						
<b>Sportage 2WD</b>	3,186	55/400*	YES	NO	19/23	\$13,995
<b>Sportage 4WD</b>	3,230	55/400*	YES	NO	19/23	\$14,495
* After 400 miles, operate engine for three to five minutes to lubricate transmission.						
<b>MAZDA</b>						
<b>2WD B-Series Pickup</b>	3,025	55/NONE	YES	NO	20/25	\$10,985
<b>4WD B-Series Pickup</b>	3,433	55/NONE	YES*	YES*	15/20	\$15,415
* With manual transfer case						
<b>NISSAN</b>						
<b>Frontier Pickup 2WD</b>	2,911	60/500	YES	NO	22/26	\$11,990
<b>Frontier Pickup 4WD</b>	3,433	60/500	YES**	NO	18/21	\$16,990
<b>Pathfinder/QX4*** 4WD</b>	3,920	60/200/500*	YES**	NO	16/18	\$26,149
* 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 neutral. ***QX4 is built by Infiniti, a division of Nissan						
<b>SUBARU</b>						
<b>Forester</b>	3,020	NONE	YES	NO	21/27	\$18,695
<b>Legacy Outback</b>	3,155	NONE	YES	NO	21/27	\$22,495
<b>SUZUKI</b>						
<b>Grand Vitara</b>	3,000	55/200*	YES*	YES*	AUTO 21/24	\$17,999
<b>Sidekick 2-dr 4WD</b>	2,480	55/200*	YES*	YES*	MANUAL 23/26	\$14,869
<b>Sidekick 4-dr 4WD</b>	2,756	55/200*	YES*	YES*	MANUAL 23/26	\$15,999
<b>Sidekick Sport 4WD</b>	2,964	55/200*	YES*	YES*	MANUAL 22/25	\$17,899
* With manual hubs only; after 200 miles, operate engine one minute with manual transmission in second, automatic transmission in drive.						

wheel-drive (AWD), offering a versatile blend of passenger-car comfort with off-highway aggressiveness.

### SUZUKI

The Suzuki lineup of subcompacts provides good value for the money—especially since items like an air conditioner and an AM/FM/cassette stereo are standard equipment. Suzuki recently announced the introduction of the Grand Vitara SUV, featuring AWD and a 24-valve, fuel-injected, dual-overhead-cam V-6 engine. The Grand Vitara has the same sleek-looking body style as the Chevrolet Tracker and has five doors.

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Before doing anything else, crunch some numbers to see what your motorhome is rated/capable to tow. Be sure to check the owner's manual for any vehicle that will be used for dinghy towing. By verifying that the car, truck or SUV can be towed on all four wheels without restrictions and drivetrain modifications, you'll eliminate the chance of

buying the wrong vehicle. Also, all motorhome manufacturers specify a gross combination weight rating (gcwr) that may not be consistent with the chassis manufacturer's gcwr. Furthermore, most motorhome manufacturers will not allow you to borrow gcwr from gwcr. If the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association weight label (posted in member-built motorhomes since September '96) does not state the motorhome gcwr or it is not stated in the owner's manual, contact the coach manufacturer to determine towing capability. There are many factors that determine gcwr, and most motorhome manufacturers do not pass on the large chassis towing capabilities currently being provided by chassis builders. They limit towing capability with specific class hitches and rear framing that puts a limit on the hitch weight and on the load to be towed. 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.

*Note: All data came directly from vehicle manufacturers. Always verify all dinghy-towing information because specifications are subject to change without notice.*