



Honda CR-V



Volvo S70 GLT

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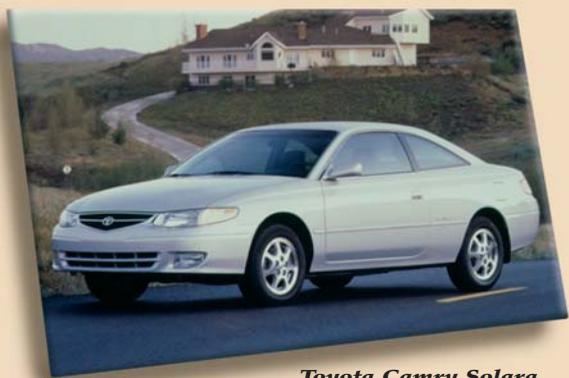
Surveys indicate that approximately 80 percent of FMCA member families tow vehicles behind their coaches when traveling. The following information was compiled to help you select a vehicle that can be flat-towed — that is, with all four wheels on the ground — and one that best fits your personal needs. The information was submitted by auto manufacturers in response to an *FMC* survey distributed in December 1998. The information pertains specifically to 1999 models and may or may not be correct for earlier years.

While FMCA members may own towed vehicles that are not listed, the information here is what was provided to *FMC* by the manufacturers. The information is subject to change, so always contact a dealer or the manufacturer for the latest information regarding any vehicle you wish to tow. Many owners manuals also provide directives about specific towing procedures, including ignition lock position, accessories, spare tires, and other items of concern.

Be sure to check the gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of your coach and make sure to stay within its limitations when towing. The GCWR is the maximum allowable total weight of the motorhome and towed vehicle combination. This figure includes the coach, passengers, fuel, water, and everything in and on the coach, plus the towed vehicle

Towing Four Wheels Down

Manufacturers are widening their scope of vehicles that can be flat-towed without significant modifications.



Toyota Camry Solara

and everything in and on it. It is also important to know the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of the motorhome. The GVWR is the weight specified by the coach manufacturer as the maximum loaded weight of the vehicle, including driver and passengers and all accessories and gear added to the coach. If you have not weighed your coach recently, now would be a good time to do that. It is best to weigh the coach when it is loaded for travel. Weigh the coach with a full water tank, holding tank, and fuel tank and with it stocked and loaded, including the passengers who might be traveling with you. While it may be unlikely that all those things will be on board at the same time, they could be, and you will know the

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maximum weight of your coach as you use it.

If you find that the coach and its contents already exceed the GVWR or the gross axle weight rating (the maximum load-carrying capacity of a single axle system as measured at the point where the tire meets the ground), you will need to reposition or remove weight from the coach.

And it's a good idea to weigh the towed vehicle before you purchase it. Approximate curb weights for the vehicles in this story have been listed in parentheses. Keep in mind that weights vary from vehicle to vehicle, depending on equipment, and fuel and any other items you put in the vehicle will increase the weight.

Also keep in mind that everything used in towing — the motorhome, the hitch, the tow bar — has weight limits in the name of safety. Check with the manufacturers of these components to ensure that your particular application is within the specifications. And see to it that all equipment is installed properly. This equipment needs to be maintained and periodically inspected to remain safe.

We can't emphasize enough that while it may be possible from a technical standpoint to tow the vehicles listed without causing transmission or transfer component damage, a number of the vehicles included in the survey will exceed the towing capacity of many motorhomes. And remember that the towing system is only as good as the lowest-rated component involved.

While the laws of some jurisdictions do not require brakes on the towed vehicle, the laws of physics still apply. Most

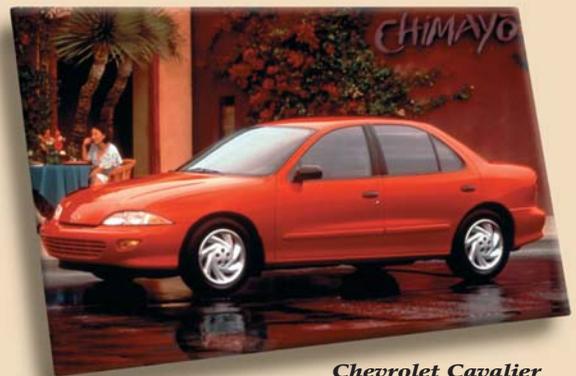


Suzuki Grand Vitara

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Subaru Impreza Sport Wagon



Chevrolet Cavalier



Saturn SW2

drivers would not think of towing a 4,000-pound boat without brakes on the boat trailer, yet some people tow 4,000-pound vehicles that are not equipped with supplemental brakes. Of course, when trying to stop, the brakes on the coach can't tell the difference between a boat and a car. Again, refer to the owners manual of the coach or chassis for auxiliary brake recommendations. Some chassis manufacturers severely restrict the weight of towed vehicles unless they are equipped with a supplemental braking system.

If the vehicle you would like to tow is not among those that can be towed without modification, all is not lost. Many vehicles can be adapted for flat-towing by adding aftermarket equipment. Remco offers three such products: the Drive

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Shaft Coupling disengages and engages the drive shaft on rear-wheel drive vehicles; the Lube Pump lubricates the automatic transmission of front-wheel-drive vehicles; and the Axle-Lock is used on front-wheel-drive vehicles with automatic transmissions. Remco can be reached at Box 27998, Omaha, NE 68127; (800) 228-2481.

While tow dollies and trailers are avoided by some because of their extra weight and the need to store them when not in use, they do offer a way to tow many vehicles without modification. For the person who frequently changes towed vehicles, this can be a major benefit. Also, brakes can be ordered on some tow dollies and trailers, thereby solving the supplemental braking issue.

Because most buyers have an idea of the type of vehicle they would like to tow on all four wheels, we have separated the vehicles into eight categories according to drive and transmission type. In the past, many motorhomers felt that vehicles with manual transmissions could be towed and those with automatic transmissions could not; however, the collected information shows that that is not necessarily true.

FRONT-WHEEL-DRIVE VEHICLES — MANUAL

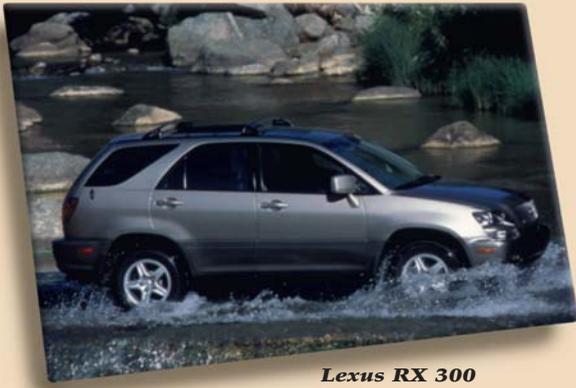
When equipped with a manual transmission, the **Ford Escort/Mercury Tracer** (2,545 pounds) can be towed on all four wheels without significant restrictions. All **Saturn** mod-



BMW Roadster

els (2,365–2,448 pounds) can be towed four wheels down at speeds not exceeding 65 mph. When towing the **Chevrolet Cavalier/Pontiac Sunfire** (2,617–2,870 pounds), speed should not exceed 65 mph. The manual-transmission **Chevrolet Metro** (1,895–1,984 pounds) can be towed, but only at speeds not to exceed 55 mph. The only limits placed on the manual-transmission **Infiniti G20** (2,956 pounds) and **Infiniti I30** (3,150 pounds) is a maximum speed of less than 70 mph and a maximum distance of less than 500 miles. When equipped with the five-speed manual transmission, the **Mitsubishi Mirage** (2,150–2,370 pounds); **Eclipse**

continued



Lexus RX 300

RS, GS, and GS-T (2,754–3,053 pounds); and 3000 GT (3,131–3,263 pounds) are flat-towable. When equipped with a manual transmission, the Toyota Camry (2,998–3,175 pounds), Corolla (2,414–2,459 pounds), Celica (2,580–2,755 pounds), and RAV4 two-wheel-drive (2,547–2,668 pounds) are all listed as having no speed or distance limits. However, Toyota states that while towing these vehicles will not result in internal damage to the transmission or transfer components, this does not eliminate the

possibility of damage to other vehicle systems, such as the body, chassis, and electrical. Toyota officials have indicated that they were developing technical service bulletins to send to all Toyota and Lexus dealers regarding the towability of the company's vehicles, as owners manuals do not currently reflect this information. The Volvo S70 (3,152–3,300 pounds) and Volvo V70 (3,307–3,400 pounds) are towable without significant restrictions when equipped with the manual transmission.

FRONT-WHEEL-DRIVE VEHICLES — AUTOMATIC

All Saturns (2,365–2,448 pounds) can be flat-towed up to the legally posted speed limit or 65 mph. When equipped with the four-speed automatic transmission, the Chevrolet Cavalier/Pontiac Sunfire (2,617–2,838 pounds) and the Pontiac Grand Am/Oldsmobile Alero (3,066 pounds) can be towed at speeds not to exceed 65 mph. The Chevrolet Malibu (3,051–3,077 pounds) has no distance restrictions but should not be towed faster than 55 mph. The Oldsmobile Cutlass (3,075 pounds) also can be towed on all four wheels but should not be towed at speeds greater

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Honda Towing

As noted in the accompanying story, the Honda CR-V — equipped with automatic or manual transmission — is the only Honda vehicle endorsed by the company for flat-towing. To prevent transmission damage to the CR-V, however, the company requires the user to shift from “drive” and then into “neutral” before turning off the engine when hooking the car up for towing. The specific procedure is laid out in the owners manual. The CR-V features Real Time 4WD, Honda's part-time four-wheel-drive system that activates when the front tires begin to spin (as on snow or ice). During normal operation, the CR-V functions as a front-wheel-drive vehicle.

Following is a letter *FMC* received from American Honda Motor Co. Inc. regarding the towing of automobiles equipped with the Honda drivetrain. **The letter pertains to all models except the CR-V, Passport, and Acura SLX.**

Honda owners manuals advise against towing at more than 35 mph or for more than 50 miles. However, this recommendation exists primarily because Honda has not conducted formal towing tests of their cars at higher speeds and for greater distances.

We are not aware of any particular problems being caused by towing any 1988 or prior year Honda/Acura automobile, with either manual or automatic transmission, with or without power steering, regardless of towing speed or mileage.

1989 and subsequent model year Honda/Acura automobiles have minor changes to the automatic transmission. If a 1989 or subsequent model year Honda/Acura must be towed with the front or all four wheels on the ground, we recommend the following before towing:

1. Check to be sure the transmission fluid level is full.
2. Release the parking brake.
3. Start the engine.
4. Shift the transmission from Park to Drive.
5. Shift from Drive to Neutral.
6. Turn off the engine; leave the key in the Accessory (I) position.
7. Make sure the radio and all accessories are turned off.

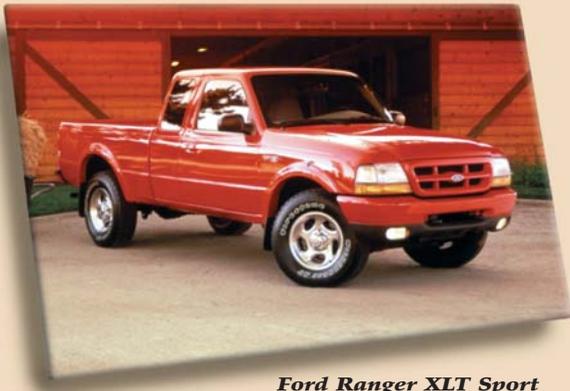
NOTICE: The steering system can be damaged if the steering wheel is locked. Always leave the key in the Accessory (I) position to prevent damage to the steering system when towing behind another vehicle.

CAUTION: SEVERE AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION DAMAGE WILL OCCUR IF THE CAR IS SHIFTED FROM REVERSE TO NEUTRAL AND THEN TOWED WITH THE DRIVE WHEELS ON THE GROUND.

We do recommend starting the engine and shifting the automatic transmission, if so equipped, through the gears approximately every 500 miles and shifting from Drive to Neutral before shutting off the engine.

For all manual transmission automobiles, release the parking brake, shift the transmission to neutral, and turn the ignition key to the Accessory (I) position to release the steering wheel lock. Make sure that the radio and all accessories are turned off.

Although experience has shown that the Honda/Acura transmission and powertrain are capable of being “motorhome towed,” American Honda does not assume responsibility for any vehicle damage or liabilities incurred due to the towing device, towing vehicle, lighting hookup, or other towing equipment or towing procedures; any responsibility for these items is assumed by the owner/operator. ■



Ford Ranger XLT Sport

than 55 mph. The **Lexus ES 300** (3,351 pounds) and **Lexus RX 300** (3,697 pounds) two-wheel-drive are listed as not sustaining internal damage to the transmission or transfer components if a 55-mph/250-mile towing limit is observed. Again, the manufacturer states that this does not eliminate the possibility of damage to other vehicle systems, such as the body, chassis, electrical, and others. And, as previously noted, Toyota officials indicated that they would be issuing technical service bulletins to Toyota and Lexus dealers regarding the towability of the company's vehicles, as this information is not currently reflected in owners manuals.

REAR-WHEEL-DRIVE VEHICLES — MANUAL

All models of the current **BMW** line (3,153–4,597 pounds) can be flat-towed without distance and speed limitations when equipped with a manual transmission. **Ford Ranger** pickup trucks (3,541 pounds) and **Ford Explorers** (4,348 pounds) are also capable of being towed without limitations when equipped with a manual transmission, as is the **Mitsubishi Montero Sport ES 5-speed** (3,510 pounds). The manual-transmission **Jeep Cherokee** (3,017 pounds) with two-wheel drive can be flat-towed, and no specific distance or speed limitations are mentioned. The 1999 **Mercedes-Benz SLK Roadster** with manual transmission can be flat-towed without modification as well.

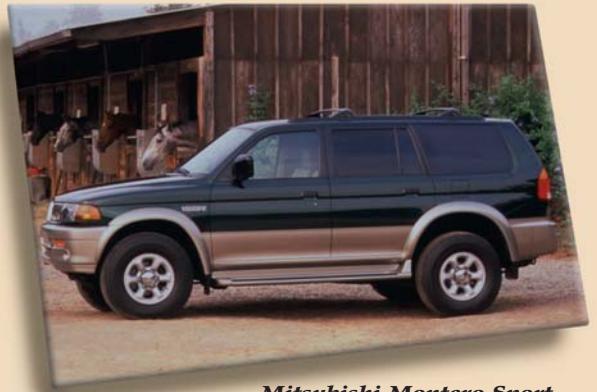
REAR-WHEEL-DRIVE VEHICLES — AUTOMATIC

No vehicles of this type were found that could be flat-towed without severe speed and/or distance restrictions.

FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE VEHICLES — MANUAL

Several vehicles in this category can be towed on all four wheels without significant restrictions. They include the manual-transmission-equipped four-wheel-drive **Ford Explorer** (4,348 pounds), **Ford Ranger** pickup truck (3,541 pounds), **Mitsubishi Montero Sport LS 5-speed** (3,985 pounds), and **Kia Sportage** (3,197–3,314 pounds). The **Ford F150/250 pickup trucks** (4,613 pounds) with the lever-operated 4x4 system can be flat-towed but only after locking out the center differential by capping off one of the front axle vacuum motor lines (see your Ford dealer). The four-wheel-drive **Suzuki Vitari** (2,723–3,020 pounds)

and **Suzuki Grand Vitari** (3,197 pounds) can be flat-towed when equipped with a manual transmission but have a 200-mile distance limit before an engine-starting procedure (outlined in the owners manual) must be carried out. The manual-transmission-equipped **Toyota RAV4** (2,723–2,844 pounds) can be towed four wheels down. Again, Toyota stipulates that while towing these vehicles will not result in internal damage to the transmission or transfer components, this does not eliminate the possibility of damage to other vehicle systems, such as the body, chassis, electrical, and others. The **Chevrolet Tracker** (2,596–2,891 pounds) can be towed at speeds not exceeding 55 mph. The **Honda CR-V** (3,126–3,245 pounds) with



Mitsubishi Montero Sport



Kia Sportage

the company's Real Time four wheel drive is the only vehicle endorsed by Honda for flat towing. To prevent transmission damage, however, the company requires the user to shift into "drive" and then into "neutral" before turning off the engine when hooking the car up for towing. For Honda's position on towing its other vehicles, please see the accompanying sidebar.

FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE VEHICLES — AUTOMATIC

This is perhaps the most complicated category. Several vehicles have very specific equipment requirements and/or procedures that must be followed for safe towing. Like their manual transmission counterparts, the **Suzuki Vitari**

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(2,723–3,020 pounds) and **Suzuki Grand Vitari** (3,197 pounds) can be towed but have a 200-mile limit before an engine-starting procedure (outlined in the owners manual) must be carried out. The **Land Rover Discovery Series II** (4,500–4,800 pounds) can be towed without modification, but the **Range Rover** (4,900 pounds) requires the simple installation of a new fuse by the dealer; then, no speed or distance limitations are imposed. The **Ford Explorer/Mercury Mountaineer** (4,348 pounds) equipped with the Control-Trac 4x4 system can be flat-towed only after the installation of a neutral tow kit. The **Ford F150/250 pickup trucks** (4,613 pounds) with the lever-operated 4x4 system can be flat-towed but only after locking out the center differential by capping off one of the front axle vacuum motor lines (see your Ford dealer). When equipped with the Autotrac automatic four-wheel-drive system, the **Chevrolet Tahoe/GMC Yukon** (4,630 pounds) and the **Chevrolet Blazer/GMC Jimmy** (4,049 pounds) can be towed at speeds not exceeding 55 mph. The **Lexus RX 300** (3,907 pounds) can be towed with a 55-mph/250-mile limit — and the stipulation that while towing these vehicles will not result in internal damage to the transmission or transfer components, this does not eliminate the possibility of damage to other vehicle systems, such as the body, chassis, and electrical. Like the manual-transmission Chevrolet Tracker, the auto-

matic **Chevrolet Tracker** (2,596–2,891 pounds) is towable at speeds up to 55 mph. The **Honda CR-V** (3,126–3,245 pounds) with the company's Real Time four wheel drive is the only vehicle endorsed by Honda for flat towing. To prevent transmission damage, however, the company requires the user to shift into "drive" and then into "neutral" before turning off the engine when hooking the car up for towing. For Honda's position on towing its other vehicles, please see the accompanying sidebar.

ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE VEHICLES — MANUAL

Subaru 1999 all-wheel-drive vehicles (2,730–3,265 pounds) — the Impreza, Legacy, and Outback — can be flat-towed without distance and speed limitations.

ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE VEHICLES — AUTOMATIC

No vehicles of this type were found that could be flat-towed without severe speed and/or distance restrictions. In fact, these vehicles generally must be towed with all four wheels on a trailer even for emergency purposes.

Although there is no "best" vehicle for everyone to tow, nor a best method for everyone to use, chances are there is a best vehicle and method for you personally. Talk with your friends, research all you can . . . and then go shopping. 🚚



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