

Motorhome Magazine Dinghy Towing Guide

motorhome magazine dinghy towing guide Embarking on adventures with a motorhome offers unparalleled freedom and flexibility, allowing travelers to explore remote destinations and enjoy outdoor activities with ease. One of the most popular ways to enhance this experience is by bringing along a dinghy—a small boat that can be easily transported and used for exploring lakes, rivers, or coastal waters. However, towing a dinghy behind your motorhome requires careful planning, proper equipment, and an understanding of safety considerations to ensure a smooth journey. This comprehensive motorhome magazine dinghy towing guide aims to provide you with all the essential information, tips, and best practices to successfully tow your dinghy and make the most of your outdoor adventures.

Understanding Dinghy Towing Basics

What Is a Dinghy?

A dinghy is typically a small boat, often inflatable or rigid-hulled, used for short trips from a larger vessel or for exploring shallow waters. In the context of motorhome travel, a dinghy can be an inflatable boat, a small rigid boat, or even a kayak or canoe that is transported on or inside the motorhome.

Why Tow a Dinghy?

Towing a dinghy provides several benefits:

- **Mobility:** Easily explore areas inaccessible to the motorhome.
- **Convenience:** Lightweight and portable, making it simple to load and unload.
- **Cost-effective:** Avoid renting boats at each destination.
- **Versatility:** Use for fishing, sightseeing, or water sports.

Types of Dinghy Towing Options

There are various methods to transport your dinghy:

- **Trailer Towing:** Using a dedicated boat trailer attached to the motorhome.
- **Roof Mounting:** Securing a smaller dinghy or kayak on the roof rack.
- **Behind Towing:** Using a dinghy dolly or tow bar to pull the boat behind the vehicle.
- **Inside the Motorhome:** Storing the dinghy within the vehicle or a storage compartment (suitable for inflatable boats).

Selecting the Right Dinghy for Towing

Considerations When Choosing a Dinghy

- **Size and Weight:** Ensure the dinghy is manageable and within your motorhome's towing capacity.
- **Material:** Inflatable boats are lightweight and portable; rigid hulls are more durable but heavier.
- **Inflation and Deflation:** Inflatable options are easy to pack away and store.
- **Purpose:** Fishing, recreation, or transportation—select based on your activity needs.
- **Compatibility:** Ensure the dinghy can be safely transported using your chosen method.

Recommended Dinghy Types for Towing

- **Inflatable Dinghies:** Popular for their portability and ease of storage.
- **Rigid-Hulled Boats:** Suitable for longer trips where durability is needed.
- **Kayaks and Canoes:** Ideal for solo or small group adventures; can be mounted on roof racks or carried inside.

Towing Equipment and Accessories

Essential Towing Equipment

- **Dinghy Dolly or Towing Bar:** Specialized equipment to tow dinghies behind the motorhome safely.
- **Trailer:** For larger or heavier dinghies, a dedicated boat trailer is recommended.
- **Straps and Tie-Downs:** Secure the dinghy firmly to prevent movement during transit.
- **Swiveling or Fixed Mounts:** For mounting on the roof or inside storage compartments.

Safety and Convenience Accessories

- **Fenders and Bumpers:** Protect your dinghy and motorhome during loading and transport.
- **Reflective Tape:** Enhance visibility during towing.

- Winch or Lifting Straps: Assist with loading and unloading. - Waterproof Covers: Protect the dinghy from weather elements during transit. Towing Techniques and Best Practices Preparing Your Dinghy for Towing 1. Inspect the Dinghy: Check for damage, leaks, or loose fittings. 2. Secure All Items: Remove or secure any loose gear inside or on the dinghy. 3. Deflate if Inflatable: Fully deflate inflatable boats for compact storage. 4. Attach Towing Equipment: Properly connect the dinghy to the towing device, ensuring all connections are secure. 5. Use Proper Tie-Downs: Use high-quality straps to prevent movement. Towing Safety Tips - Maintain Appropriate Speed: Keep within the recommended towing speeds, typically under 55 mph (88 km/h). - Allow for Extra Stopping Distance: Towing adds weight and length, requiring longer braking distances. - Check Towing Setup Frequently: Stop periodically to inspect straps and connections. - Use Warning Flags or Lights: Make your towing setup visible to other drivers. - Be Mindful of Road Conditions: Avoid rough terrains that could dislodge or damage the dinghy. Legal Considerations and Regulations Check Local Regulations - Different regions may have specific laws regarding towing equipment, maximum trailer length, and weight restrictions. - Some areas may require special permits or additional safety equipment. - Always adhere to speed limits and safety guidelines. Towing Compatibility - Verify your motorhome's towing capacity to ensure it can safely tow the weight of the dinghy and associated equipment. - Consult your vehicle's manual or manufacturer for specific towing instructions. Launching and Recovering Your Dinghy Best Practices for Launching - Choose a suitable location with easy access and minimal current. - Ensure the dinghy is securely attached and stable before launching. - Use a winch or crew assistance for safe deployment. Recovery Tips - Approach the shore or dock slowly. - Use mooring lines or a crew to assist with stabilization. - Carefully secure the dinghy to prevent damage during transport back. Maintenance and Storage Tips Maintaining Your Dinghy - Rinse with fresh water after each use, especially after saltwater exposure. - Check for punctures or leaks regularly. - Store inflatables in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. Storage Recommendations - Inflate inflatable dinghies periodically to prevent creases or damage. - Store rigid boats on racks or in protective covers. - Keep all equipment organized and accessible. Troubleshooting Common Issues Difficulty in Towing or Launching - Ensure straps and connections are secure. - Check for damage or wear on towing equipment. - Confirm the dinghy's weight and size are compatible with your vehicle. Damage During Transit - Use proper padding and protective covers. - Regularly inspect the towing setup. - Avoid rough roads and sudden maneuvers. Conclusion Towing a dinghy behind your motorhome can significantly enhance your outdoor adventures, providing the freedom to explore waterways and enjoy water-based activities. Proper planning, selecting the right equipment, understanding safety protocols, and adhering to legal requirements are essential to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience. By following this comprehensive dinghy towing guide, you can confidently transport your boat, protect your investment, and make the most of your journey on the road and on the water. Remember, safety always comes first—prepare thoroughly, inspect your gear regularly, and enjoy your adventures with peace of mind.

Motorhome Magazine Dinghy Towing Guide: The Ultimate Expert Review for Safe and Efficient Towing When it comes to RV travel, freedom and flexibility are paramount. One of the most

popular ways to enhance your adventures is by towing a dinghy — a small vehicle you can use for exploring local sights once you've arrived at your destination. Whether you're heading to national parks, city tours, or remote camping spots, a properly selected and configured dinghy can significantly expand your travel options. This guide aims to provide comprehensive insights into dinghy towing, helping you make informed decisions for your motorhome setup, ensuring safety, legality, and convenience.

Understanding Dinghy Towing: What Is It and Why Is It Important?

Dinghy towing refers to the practice of pulling a small vehicle, such as a car, motorcycle, or ATV, behind a motorhome using a dedicated tow system. This method is popular because it allows RV travelers to explore areas without the bulk and hassle of driving the larger vehicle. Why is dinghy towing important? - Enhances flexibility: After parking your motorhome, your dinghy becomes a mobile vehicle for sightseeing and errands. - Saves time and fuel: You avoid repeatedly driving the motorhome into towns or congested areas. - Economical: It reduces the wear and tear on your RV's engine and transmission by not driving the RV for short trips. - Safety and convenience: Smaller vehicles are easier to maneuver, park, and navigate through crowded areas or narrow roads. However, to enjoy these benefits safely, understanding the nuances of proper dinghy towing is essential.

Types of Dinghy Towing

Knowing the different types of dinghy towing is fundamental for choosing the right setup for your travel style and vehicle.

1. Flat Towing (Four-Down Towing)

This is the most popular method where the dinghy is towed with all four wheels on the ground. It typically requires a dedicated towing setup that allows the vehicle to roll freely behind the RV. - Pros: - No need for additional equipment like trailers. - Easier to set up and disconnect. - Suitable for many small cars with manual or compatible automatic transmissions. - Cons: - Not all vehicles can be flat-towed without modifications. - Potential wear on transmission if not properly equipped.

2. Dinghy on a Trailer

In this setup, the vehicle is loaded onto a trailer that is then towed behind the RV. - Pros: - Compatible with virtually all types of vehicles. - Offers protection from road debris and weather. - Easier to transport vehicles that cannot be flat-towed. - Cons: - Requires additional equipment and space for storage. - More complex setup and higher costs.

3. Tow Dollies

A tow dolly is a specialized trailer with two wheels, allowing front-wheel or all-wheel-drive vehicles to be towed with the front wheels lifted. - Pros: - Suitable for certain all-wheel and front-wheel-drive vehicles. - Less expensive than full trailers. - Cons: - Not ideal for vehicles with rear-wheel drive or certain transmission types. - Additional setup and handling considerations.

Key Factors to Consider When Choosing a Dinghy for Towing

Selecting the right vehicle to tow is crucial for safety, legality, and convenience. Here are the primary factors to evaluate:

1. Towing Compatibility

Not all vehicles are suitable for flat towing. Check the owner's manual or consult with the manufacturer to confirm if your vehicle can be flat-towed and any specific requirements.

2. Transmission Type

- Manual transmissions: Generally easier to flat-tow, often requiring minimal modifications. - Automatic transmissions: Many can be flat-towed with the addition of driveshaft disconnects, transmission lube pumps, or other equipment. - CVT and other specialty transmissions: May have restrictions or require specialized modifications.

3. Vehicle Size and Weight

Ensure the dinghy's weight is within your motorhome's towing capacity and that it's manageable for your driving comfort.

4. Towing Equipment Compatibility

- Tow bars: Must match both your vehicle and RV mounting points. - Base plates: Custom-fitted mounting points on the vehicle's frame. - Lighting and braking systems: Proper wiring and braking systems are essential for safety and legal compliance.

5. Ease of Use and Storage

Consider how easily the vehicle can be attached/detached and stored when not in use.

Essential Equipment for Dinghy Towing

Proper equipment ensures safe, legal, and efficient towing.

1. Tow Bar

The core component connecting your RV to the dinghy. Types include: - Rigid Tow Bars: Simple, durable, and easy to connect/disconnect. - Retractable Tow Bars: Offer ease of use with adjustable features. - Articulating or Pivoting Tow Bars: Provide better maneuverability and turn radius.

2. Base Plate Kit

A custom-fitted mounting point installed on the vehicle's frame, allowing secure attachment of the tow bar.

3. Wiring Harness and Lighting System

Ensures that turn signals, brake lights, and running lights on the dinghy synchronize with the RV. Options include: - Plug-and-play wiring kits for simplicity. - Separate lighting systems with magnetic or adhesive-mounted lights.

4. Brake Systems

Legal requirements in many states and provinces mandate supplemental braking systems to assist the vehicle's brakes when towing. - Portable Braking Systems: Portable units that connect to the dinghy's brake pedal or electrical system. - Integrated Braking Systems: Built-in systems that activate automatically.

5. Safety Accessories

- Tow bar safety cables or chains to prevent detachment. - Mirror extensions for better rear visibility. - Reflective markers for visibility.

Legal and Safety Considerations

Ensuring compliance with laws and safety standards is critical.

1. Legal Requirements

- Lighting and signaling: Proper functioning brake and turn signals are mandatory. - Braking systems: Many jurisdictions require supplementary brakes for towed vehicles over a certain weight. - Speed limits: Towing typically restricts maximum speeds; check local regulations.

2. Safety Tips

- Pre-tow inspection: Verify all connections, lights, and brakes before departure. - Weight distribution: Properly distribute weight to avoid sway or instability. - Driving adjustments: Allow for longer stopping distances and wider turns. - Regular checks: Stop periodically to inspect connections, brakes, and lights.

Best Practices for Safe and Efficient Dinghy Towing

Achieving a smooth towing experience involves adherence to best practices: - Practice before long trips: Familiarize yourself with towing procedures, handling, and braking. - Use a spotter or rear-view camera: Helps monitor the dinghy during travel. - Maintain your equipment: Regularly inspect tow bars, wiring, and brakes. - Plan your routes: Avoid roads with tight turns or steep grades that could challenge your towing setup. - Communicate with your team: If traveling with others, coordinate signals and safety procedures.

Top Recommended Vehicles for Flat Towing

While many vehicles can be flat-towed, some are particularly popular among RVers: - Jeep Wrangler: Known for ease of flat-towing with minimal modifications. - Ford Mustang (certain models): With proper equipment, easily flat-towable. - Chevrolet Camaro: Compatible with flat towing procedures for specific years. - Small SUVs (e.g., Subaru Outback, Honda CR-V): Generally suitable with proper base plates and equipment. - Compact cars (e.g., Fiat 500, Mini Cooper): Light and easy to tow, ideal for quick trips. Always verify the latest manufacturer guidelines before towing.

Cost Considerations and Budgeting

Dinghy towing can involve significant upfront costs, but these are often offset by convenience and safety: - Equipment costs: Tow bars, base plates, wiring, and braking systems can range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars depending on vehicle and system complexity. - Installation costs: Professional installation of base plates and wiring may be necessary. - Maintenance: Regular inspections and repairs to ensure safety. Plan your budget accordingly and explore packages or kits that offer compatibility and ease of installation.

Conclusion: Making the Most of Your Dinghy Towing Experience

Dinghy towing is an invaluable tool for RV travelers seeking to maximize their exploration capabilities. With proper vehicle selection, quality equipment, adherence to legal requirements, and safety practices, towing a dinghy can enhance your adventures, offering independence and

convenience. Remember, success in dinghy towing hinges on careful planning, thorough research, and regular maintenance. Consult with RV and vehicle experts, review your vehicle's manual, and stay informed about evolving regulations. By investing in

Questions & Answers About motorhome magazine dinghy towing guide

No	Question	Answer
1	What are the key considerations when choosing a dinghy to tow with my motorhome?	When selecting a dinghy for towing, consider its weight, size, towing capacity of your motorhome, ease of attachment, and whether it can be safely towed behind your specific vehicle. Ensure the dinghy is compatible with your towing setup and meets safety standards.
2	Are there specific types of dinghies recommended for motorhome towing?	Lightweight, compact dinghies such as inflatable models or small rigid hulls are ideal for towing. Inflatable dinghies are popular due to their portability and ease of storage, but rigid hull dinghies can also be suitable if they are lightweight and trailerable.
3	What towing methods are commonly used for dinghies behind motorhomes?	Common methods include using a tow bar, dinghy trailers, or specialized dinghy towing brackets. Inflatable dinghies are often towed on a small trailer or with a dedicated dinghy towing system that prevents swaying and enhances stability.
4	How do I ensure safety when towing a dinghy with my motorhome?	Ensure the dinghy is securely attached with appropriate towing equipment, regularly check for wear and tear, follow weight and towing capacity guidelines, and drive at safe speeds. Also, use safety flags and lights if required, and familiarize yourself with local towing regulations.
5	Are there any legal requirements or regulations for dinghy towing with a motorhome?	Regulations vary by region, but generally, you must adhere to weight limits, use proper towing equipment, and obey traffic laws regarding towing. Always check local regulations to ensure compliance and obtain any necessary permits.
6	What maintenance tips should I follow for a dinghy used in towing?	Regularly inspect the dinghy and towing equipment for damage, ensure proper storage to prevent deterioration, clean the dinghy after use, and check inflation levels if inflatable. Also, verify that trailers or tow bars are in good condition before each trip.
7	Can I tow a dinghy behind any motorhome, or are there specific requirements?	Not all motorhomes can tow a dinghy; it depends on the vehicle's towing capacity and setup. Consult your motorhome's manual and a professional to ensure your vehicle can handle the additional load safely.

8	What are the pros and cons of inflatable versus rigid dinghies for towing?	Inflatable dinghies are lightweight, portable, and easy to store, making them ideal for towing. Rigid dinghies offer better durability and performance but are heavier and less portable. Your choice depends on your towing setup, storage space, and usage needs.
9	Are there specific brands or models recommended in Motorhome Magazine's dinghy towing guide?	Motorhome Magazine's dinghy towing guide highlights reputable brands like Zodiac, AB Inflatables, and Sea Eagle for inflatables, as well as lightweight rigid hulls from brands like Carolina Skiff. Always select models that match your vehicle's towing capacity and your usage requirements.
10	What additional accessories can enhance dinghy towing safety and convenience?	Consider using tow bar adapters, safety flags, reflective tape, proper lighting, and protective covers. Additionally, installing a dinghy winch or tie-down straps can improve security during towing and ease of handling when launching or retrieving your dinghy.

motorhome towing tips, dinghy towing regulations, RV dinghy setup, towed vehicle safety, motorhome accessory guide, RV towing laws, dinghy towing accessories, motorhome travel tips, RV towing equipment, dinghy installation instructions