

...preliminary testing this appears to carpet and cushion mats as well. The rotational force of the tires results in the PillowTrack being wadded up and shot out behind the tire, with very little forward progress being made.

The second attribute that contributed to distance climbed was, not surprisingly, ladder length, as this allows for the most likely transition between the first axle to the next, maintaining momentum. Interestingly, the surface texture and tread pattern of the ladder made little contribution to distance climbed, at least in sand.

To justify the bulk, weight and expense of a little-used tool, we recommend that ladders be suitable for multiple functions, even something as simple as flooring for your rack. Ideally, the ladders could also be used as a table, or the flooring for a field shower. Versatility becomes even more important when the ladders are anticipated to be used infrequently.

Other than my trip through the western Sahara, I have never carried sand ladders, and despite the results of this test, I have no intention of doing so in the future. I think the vehicle selected should have reserve capability for the terrain anticipated, the driver must have experience/training in that terrain type, and he must select the proper tire size/construction, and appropriate pressure. With the right vehicle, the need for sand ladders rarely, if ever arises, and they can be replaced by much more functional tools I already carry on the vehicle: a shovel, winch, and Pull-Pal. For the sand tests featured here, we used a 2009 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon Unlimited with 35-inch tires. At 12 PSI, the vehicle not only (easily) climbed all the hills used in the testing, but also was able to ascend 100-foot tall dunes, chasing 400-horsepower dune buggies through the Imperial Sand Dunes.

For the Editor's Choice, I selected the Mantec Sand Tracks, primarily because they do everything well, including a second-place finish in the sand climbs and a surprisingly effective result in the bridging test. The units are also in the middle of the pack on weight, yet have the greatest surface area and can be easily mounted to the flooring of a roof rack. The Mantec Bridging Ladder was clearly the best overall performer, but not by a wide margin, and comes at considerable expense in both cost and weight/bulk.

The MaxTax got the nod for the Value Award. It performed exactly as advertised, and is relatively compact and easy to handle. It performed toward the top of the pack in each test, and yielded good results in bridging and ramping. At \$290 a pair, it is a real value. We also considered the TrackPad, but have concerns with long-term durability. Even just a few controlled sand tests resulted in broken edges and splintering. It's a great value at \$96 for the pair, and has proven a popular choice in recent years. ☺

Weight (pair)	42 lbs	26 lbs
Dimensions	60" x 15" x 4"	48" x 1-1/4"
Material	Aluminum	Polyester
Ramping Deflection	1/2"	Fail
Sand/Gravel Climb	1st	5th
Dune Climb	1st	5th



## Off-Road Trail Tools Wheel Chock and Emergency Sand Ladder \$99 each

As a unique alternative to the single-purpose sand ladder, we tested the ORTT wheel chocks in each of our sand tests. Designed primarily as a robust wheel chock, this device looks at home holding back a 16,000 lb. EarthFloamer and works perfectly as a stabilizing chock for winching operations. It is also designed to be used in emergencies as a sand ladder, and is effective in snow, with dozens of star-shaped perforations. On the gravel climb, they did well, besting the PillowTracks for distance climbed. In the soft sand of the dunes, they were buried quickly and provided the shortest distance climbed. I can see these units working well to complement a standard sand ladder pair used on another axle, or to assist with a properly prepared recovery, by placing the units under two tires once the vehicle has been dug out. Overall, the units exceeded my expectations, and will work as advertised in emergency situations. [offroadtrailtools.com](http://offroadtrailtools.com), 520-579-2079

