

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1957-1979 Ford Falcon & Ranchero Buyer's Guide

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1957–1979 Ford Falcon & Ranchero Buyer's Guide

Model Year 1957–1979

Models	Ford Falcon (1960–70) / Ranchero (1957–79)
Coverage	All generations; Sprint, convertible, Deluxe Ranchero
Market	Entry-level classic Ford; buy condition, verify claims
Authentication	VIN + data plate + Marti Report
Key check	Rust map (torque boxes, cowl, bed); cold start; independent inspection

Every specification in this guide was checked against factory literature, marque references, period road tests, and documented survivor cars. Where sources disagree or the record is silent, this guide says so rather than guessing.

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Inside This Guide

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Chapter 1 — Why Buy a Falcon or Ranchero

The Falcon is the affordable front door to classic Fords: simple, honest, supported by the deepest economy-car parts pipeline in the hobby. The Ranchero is the utility play — America's first car-based pickup, a conversation piece that hauls. Both trade at fractions of Mustang money while sharing the Mustang's mechanical DNA. For the buyer who wants to drive and enjoy rather than warehouse appreciation, the Falcon-Ranchero pair is the rational choice: low buy-in, low maintenance, high parts availability, and a club (the Falcon Club of America) that supports every year built.

The market reality: Falcons and Rancheros are bought to be driven and improved, not to be stored. Condition grades matter more than model years; a solid six-cylinder 1963 coupe in good original condition is a better buy than a rusty 'rare' variant with a story. The Sprint V8s and the 1963½–65 convertibles carry genuine premiums — verified by documentation, never by stripes. The Ranchero market splits cleanly: Falcon-based (1960–65) and Fairlane/ Torino-based (1966–79) are different cars with different buyers — know which you're shopping before comparing prices.

Chapter 2 — The Falcon Line: 1960–1970 at a Glance

The Falcon's three generations define the buying map. First generation (1960–63): the original economy car — 144 and 170 sixes, simple trim, honest transportation. The 1963 Sprint introduced the 260 V8; 1963½ brought the convertible. Second generation (1964–65): Mustang-adjacent styling, the 289 V8 available, the Sprint hardtop and convertible — the collector Falcons. Third generation (1966–70): larger, quieter, available with the 200 six and 289/302 V8s — the comfortable drivers, least collected, best value.



The buying advice by generation: 1960–63 for the purist and the budget buyer — simplest, cheapest, most honest; 1964–65 for the collector — Sprint V8s and convertibles carry the premiums and the documentation burden; 1966–70 for the driver — most car for the money, V8s common, prices lowest. The 1965 model year is the volume anchor (documented 35,858 two-door sedans) and the restoration guide's subject — parts support is deepest here. Buy the generation that matches your intent, not the one with the best story.

Generation	Years	Character
First	1960–63	Pure economy; Sprint V8 '63
Second	1964–65	Collector; Sprint, convertible
Third	1966–70	Comfortable driver; best value

Chapter 3 — The Ranchero Line: 1957–1979 at a Glance

The Ranchero predates the Falcon and outlives it: 1957–59 on the full-size Ford platform (the original car-pickup), 1960–65 on the Falcon compact platform (the light, simple, affordable Ranchero most buyers picture), 1966–67 on the Fairlane intermediate, 1968–79 on the Torino (growing into a true mid-size utility with big-block availability and the 1970s' luxury trim). The 1977–79 LTD II-based final years are the forgotten Rancheros — cheap, comfortable, and increasingly noticed.

The buying map: 1957–59 for the full-size collector (rarest, most expensive, thinnest parts); 1960–65 Falcon-based for the classic Ranchero experience (the 1965 Deluxe's 8,724-unit run and the 990 bucket-seat cars are the scarcity points); 1966–79 for the driver — bigger, more powerful, more comfortable, cheapest per pound. The bed is the inspection center: 800-pound capacity on the 1965, but sixty years of hauling means bed floors, tailgates, and bed-to-cab seams all get the rust and damage check. A Ranchero is a working vehicle wearing car clothes — inspect it like both.

Chapter 4 — What They Cost: Market Ranges

Falcon and Ranchero prices are the hobby's floor for good reason: volume production, simple construction, and a market that buys drivers. As a rough guide (condition is everything): project-grade six-cylinder cars trade at the bottom — often under five figures for honest projects; solid drivers run the middle — presentable, usable, needing nothing urgent; restored and Sprint/convertible cars reach the top — with documented Sprint V8s and 1963½–65 convertibles commanding multiples of standard cars.

The Ranchero follows the same ladder with a utility premium for solid beds and a discount for bed damage — the bed's condition moves the price more than any other single factor. The price discipline that matters: pay for condition and documentation, never for stories. A 'Sprint' without Sprint documentation is a six-cylinder car with badges; a 'Deluxe Ranchero' without the data plate is a standard car with trim. The market punishes story-buying in these cars faster than anywhere, because the volume makes comparison shopping easy — there's always another Falcon.

Chapter 5 — VIN and Data-Plate Decoding

The 1960–69 Ford VIN: first digit model year, second assembly plant, third and fourth body series, fifth engine code — U and V for the sixes, F for the 260 V8, with the 289's codes by year — and the final six sequential. The fifth character is the quick authenticity check on any V8 claim: a 'Sprint' with a six engine code was born a six-cylinder car. The data plate (driver's door) carries body, color, trim, date, axle, and transmission codes — the build specification that documentation must match.