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The opening pages of

1958-1976 Chevrolet Biscayne & Caprice Buyer's Guide

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1958–1976 Chevrolet Biscayne & Caprice Buyer's Guide

Model Year 1958–1976

Models	Chevrolet Biscayne (1958–72) / Caprice (1965–76)
Coverage	X-frame through B-body; big-blocks, convertibles, Estate
Market	Most car per dollar; verify big-block claims
Authentication	VIN + cowl tag + suffix/casting/date + paperwork
Key check	Rust map; big-block verification; hidden headlamps; A/C

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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Chapter 1 — Why Buy a Biscayne or Caprice

The full-size Chevrolet is the most car for the money in the classic market: big, comfortable, V8-powered, and supported by the deepest parts pipeline in the hobby. The Biscayne is the honest end — the fleet special and stripper that hot-rodders love, cheap to buy and cheap to run. The Caprice is the luxury end — Chevrolet's flagship, formal roof, hidden headlamps, big-block availability, and interiors that embarrassed cars costing twice as much. Between them they cover every full-size buyer from the budget hot-rodder to the comfort collector.

The market reality favors the buyer heavily. Full-size Chevrolets sold in enormous volume — the 1958 Biscayne alone moved 377,000 cars — which means supply is deep, prices are rational, and parts are everywhere. Condition dominates: a solid small-block Caprice coupe is a better buy than a rusty big-block car with a story, because the big-block premium only pays on documented cars (Chapter 13). The buyer who wants maximum classic-car experience per dollar — room for six, V8 power, highway comfort, show presence — finds it here first.

Chapter 2 — The Full-Size Line: 1958–1976 at a Glance

The Biscayne arrived in 1958 as Chevrolet's price leader on the new X-frame chassis (117.5-inch wheelbase): the 235 six at 145 hp, the 283 at 185, the 348 up to 315 — honest full-size transportation that sold 377,000 strong in its debut year. The 1959–60 cars refined the formula; the 1961–64 cars brought the 409 legend (and the Biscayne's lightweight sleeper reputation); and 1965 brought the perimeter frame, the coil-spring B-body, and the Caprice — first as the \$200 Z18 luxury package on the Impala four-door hardtop, then as its own series from 1966.



The 1965–70 first-generation Caprice is this series' restoration subject and the buyer's sweet spot: formal-roof coupe (1966–67 exclusive), hidden headlamps (1968+, Caprice-only), the full engine range from the 283 to the 454, and the luxury trim that defined the line. The 1971–76 second generation grew larger and plusher — the ultimate highway cars, cheapest per pound, with the 454 available and prices at the market's floor. The buying advice: 1958–64 for the vintage collector (thinner parts, higher prices); 1965–70 for the classic buyer (deepest support, clearest market); 1971–76 for maximum car per dollar.

Era	Years	Character
X-frame	1958–64	Price leader; 409 legend
First Caprice	1965–70	Luxury flagship; sweet spot
Second gen.	1971–76	Maximum car per dollar

Chapter 3 — Biscayne vs. Caprice: Two Philosophies

The Biscayne and Caprice are opposite ends of the same platform, and the choice between them is philosophical. The Biscayne is the stripper: minimal trim, rubber mats, six-cylinder or small-block power — the car the factory built for fleets and the car hot-rodders bought for lightness. A 1960s Biscayne with a big-block is the classic sleeper: taxi looks, thunder under the hood. The Biscayne buyer values honesty and potential over equipment.

The Caprice is the flagship: the formal roof, the walnut and plush, the hidden headlamps, the extra sound deadening and courtesy lights — the car Chevrolet built to keep luxury buyers from wandering to other brands. The Caprice buyer values comfort, presence, and completeness: every option working, every trim piece present, the luxury experience intact. Neither philosophy is wrong; they're different cars for different owners. Know which you are before shopping — a stripper bought for luxury money (or vice versa) is the market's most common full-size mistake.

Chapter 4 — What They Cost: Market Ranges

Full-size Chevrolet prices are the market's floor for V8 classics. At the bottom: six-cylinder and small-block Biscaynes and sedans — honest drivers and projects at entry prices, the cheapest V8 motoring available. In the middle: solid Caprice coupes and hardtop with small-blocks — presentable, comfortable, complete. At the top: documented big-block cars (the 1969 L36 427 at 390 hp, the 546 L72 buyers' special-order 425-hp cars, the 1970 454s), convertibles (where offered), and low-mileage originals — collector money with collector documentation.

The big-block premium is the market's sharpest edge: a documented L36 or L72 car commands multiples of a small-block car — but only documented (Chapter 13). An undocumented '427' claim adds nothing until proven, because big-block swaps are the full-size Chevrolet's most common modification. The convertible premium (where convertibles were offered) is real and verification-dependent — body code 67 in the VIN. The price discipline: condition first, documentation second, stories never.

Chapter 5 — VIN and Cowl-Tag Decoding

The 1965–71 Chevrolet VIN: first digit division (1 = Chevrolet), second series (5 = Biscayne, 6 = Caprice/Impala — the quick model check), third and fourth body style (47 = Caprice coupe, 67 = convertible), fifth engine code, then year, plant, sequential. A Biscayne VIN's second digit is 5; a Caprice's is 6 — a 'Caprice' with a 5-series VIN is a Biscayne wearing badges. The cowl tag adds paint, trim, build date, and options — photographed and decoded against the model year, because Chevrolet codes are year-specific.

The engine-code fifth digit is the big-block check's first step (Chapter 13): the born-with engine is recorded here, and a '427 car' whose VIN says small-block was born a small-block car. For 1958–64 cars, the VIN system differs