

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1965 Buick Wildcat Restoration Guide

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so you can judge the depth before you spend a dollar.

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Factory-Correct Restoration Reference

1965 Buick Wildcat Restoration Guide

Model Years 1965

Model	Buick Wildcat — full-size performance series
Body / frame	126-in wheelbase, Electra-length chassis
Engines	401 Nailhead (325 hp); 425 (340 hp); Super Wildcat dual-quad 425 (360 hp)
Transmission	Super Turbine 400 automatic; manual rare
Production	68,233 (all Wildcats, 1965)
Identity	First year of the three-series Wildcat: base, DeLuxe, Custom

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

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1. What this guide is — and is not

This is a single-year guide. It covers model year 1965 only. Where a neighbouring year differs, the difference is stated as a difference — the other year's parts, ratings and trim are never silently borrowed. Shared platform engineering is shared honestly; the specification table, the year-change register and the finishes in this guide are this year's own.

2. The year in brief

The Wildcat name began as an Invicta package in 1962 and became a series of its own for 1963, but 1965 is the year it grew up. The car moved onto the long 126-inch chassis, the range split into three series — base, DeLuxe and Custom — and the full-size performance formula was set for the rest of the decade: the biggest Buick engines, bucket-seat sportiness where ordered, and LeSabre-based sheet metal wearing its own grille and trim.

Under the bonnet sits the last flowering of the Nailhead. The standard 401 is rated 325 hp; the 425 gives 340 hp with a single four-barrel, and the dual-quad Super Wildcat 425 is rated 360 hp. A correct 1965 restoration is a Nailhead restoration — the big-valve 430 that replaced it is a different engine in every detail that matters at the workbench.

3. Year-change register

Read this register before ordering anything. It is the difference between a 1965 car and a car that merely looks like one from across the street.

Item	1964	This year (1965)
Series structure	Wildcat series (1963–64 pattern)	Three series: base, DeLuxe, Custom
Wheelbase	123 in (1964)	126 in — Electra-length chassis
Standard engine	401 Nailhead, 325 hp	401 Nailhead, 325 hp (carried, now the base of a bigger car)
Top engine	425 dual-quad, 360 hp	Super Wildcat 425 dual-quad, 360 hp
Body styles	Coupe, convertible, 4-dr hardtop (1964)	Base/DeLuxe: 4-dr sedan, 4-dr hardtop, sport coupe, convertible. Custom: coupe and convertible only
Trim identity	Wildcat script and trim	Series-specific trim; Custom carries the richest interior



4. Specification table — 1965

Item	Specification
Wheelbase	126 in
Platform	GM full-size (B/C-body family), body-on-frame
Standard engine	401 cu in Nailhead V8, 325 hp (SAE gross)
Optional engines	425 cu in Nailhead, 340 hp; Super Wildcat 425 dual-quad, 360 hp
Transmission	Super Turbine 400 3-speed automatic (manual rare)
Rear axle	Positraction limited-slip optional
Production	68,233
Series	Base, DeLuxe, Custom

5. Numbers, tags and identity

- Decode the Fisher body plate before anything else: it carries the series, body style, paint and trim that separate a base car from a Custom — the value and the correct parts both follow from it.
- Engine identity is by stampings and casting dates, not by the air-cleaner decal. A 1965 401 or 425 should date-code ahead of the car's build date by days to weeks.
- Dual-quad Super Wildcat hardware (intake, carburetors, linkage) is the year's most forged detail. Verify casting numbers before paying Super Wildcat money.

6. Engines and transmissions

- **401 Nailhead (standard).** 325 hp, single four-barrel. The Nailhead's small valves and vertical valve covers are its fingerprints; rebuild parts and knowledge run through the Buick specialists, not generic big-block channels.
- **425 Nailhead.** 340 hp with one four-barrel; the Super Wildcat dual-quad version is rated 360 hp and is the year's performance ceiling.
- **Super Turbine 400.** Buick's name for its three-speed automatic; a manual gearbox in a 1965 Wildcat is genuinely rare — document it if the car has one.
- All 1965 ratings are SAE gross, measured without accessories. Compare them only with other gross-era figures.

7. Paint, trim and finishes

Three series means three interior specifications; order upholstery against the trim code on the body plate, never against a photograph of another series. Exterior brightwork is series-specific at the rockers and rear quarters, and the Custom's richer trim is the most often lost to cheaper substitutions during older repaints.

8. Rust and inspection map

On a 1965, start the inspection at the trunk and work forward: this is the first year of the big chassis, and its cars have now had six decades to rot in the same places.