

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1969 Buick Riviera Gran Sport 430 Restoration Guide

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Nothing here is rewritten or summarised — it is the product itself,
so you can judge the depth before you spend a dollar.

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RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1969 Buick Riviera GS 430

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

restorationessentials.polsia.app

Single-year coverage. Factory-correct specifications. No guesswork.

SAMPLE EXCERPT — full guide available at the link on the cover sheet



Manufacturer History

Buick was founded in 1903 by David Dunbar Buick and became a founding pillar of General Motors in 1908, the company William C. Durant built around the Buick Motor Company. From the start Buick occupied the upper-middle of the GM ladder: above Oldsmobile and Pontiac, below Cadillac, the 'doctor's car' for buyers who wanted prestige without the Cadillac price.

Two engineering signatures defined Buick for decades. The first was the overhead-valve engine: Buick built OHV engines from the company's earliest days and never looked back. The second was the Nailhead V8 (1953-1966), so called for its small, vertical valves that made the rocker-arm studs look like nail heads. Nailheads ran hot, breathed poorly at high rpm, and made enormous low-end torque - exactly the formula Buick's customers liked.

Buick was late to the factory muscle party. Pontiac had the GTO in 1964 and Oldsmobile the 4-4-2; Buick's answer, the Skylark Gran Sport, arrived at midyear 1965 with a 401-cubic-inch Nailhead wearing a '400' badge. It sold in strong numbers, and the GS became a standalone series in 1967 with a new 400-cubic-inch V8. The 1968 redesign brought the GS 400, the Stage 1 option arrived in January 1968, and in 1970 the GS 455 replaced the 400 with Buick's biggest big-block - the torque monster that made Buick the quiet giant of the muscle era.

The Riviera Gran Sport followed a parallel path. The Riviera itself was Buick's personal luxury coupe from 1963; the Gran Sport package, introduced for 1965, added the dual-quad 425 Nailhead and handling upgrades. The 430 replaced the Nailhead in 1967, and the Riviera GS remained the gentleman's performance Buick through 1969, tracked by collectors today as one of the most documentable Buicks ever built.

Buick's muscle era ended the way everyone's did: compression dropped to 8.5:1 for 1971, net horsepower ratings arrived for 1972, and the GS faded from a headline act to an option package. But the cars never lost their following. The Buick GS Club of America and the Sloan Museum's Buick Gallery in Flint, Michigan, keep the paper trail alive - and that paper trail is what makes a real Buick worth restoring.

2 — Model History

The Riviera was Buick's personal luxury coupe from 1963 - Bill Mitchell's masterpiece and the car that invented the American personal-luxury segment. The Gran Sport package arrived for 1965 as option A9: the dual-quad 425 Nailhead, heavy-duty suspension, and GS badging on the most elegant Buick ever built. Only 3,354 were built, and the VIN alone cannot identify one - the GS is proven by the build sheet and Protect-O-Plate.

The second-generation Riviera (1966-1970) carried the GS forward with the new 430 V8 replacing the Nailhead for 1967. The 1968-1969 Riviera GS cars - 5,337 and 5,272 built respectively - paired the 360-horsepower 430 with sport suspension, limited-slip differential, and engine-bay dress-up. They are the gentleman's muscle Buicks: full luxury equipment with genuine performance credentials.

Catalog note: the 1965 guide's catalog slug reads 'riviera-gs-401,' but the authentic 1965 Riviera Gran Sport used the 425 Nailhead, not the 401. The title and content are factually corrected to the 425; the slug is retained only as the filename key.

3 — What Is Unique About This Model Year

1969 was the last year of the 430 - and the last year of the classic-format Riviera GS. The 360-horsepower 430 continued, but the transmission changed: the TH400 replaced the Super Turbine 400, a running change that matters for correct restoration.

The GS package was priced at \$131.57 and contented with sport suspension, limited-slip differential, and engine-bay dress-up. At 5,272 of 52,872 Rivieras, roughly one in ten 1969 Rivieras was a GS.

1969 styling updates (grille, trim, details) distinguish the car from the 1968 at a glance - the judging guides



as separate years, and so does this guide.

As the final 430 GS, the 1969 carries a modest but real premium over the 1968 - end-of-era cars always do - and the TH400 change makes transmission-date-code verification part of the authentication.

Year-to-year changes

- Last year of the 430 and the classic-format Riviera GS
- TH400 replaces the Super Turbine 400 (running change)
- GS package \$131.57: 5,272 of 52,872 Rivieras
- Styling updates distinguish 1969 from 1968 for judging

4 — VIN Decoding

1969 Riviera VINs are 13 digits with no engine code. Pattern: 494879H100001.

Position 1: 4 = Buick. Positions 2-3: 94 = Riviera series. Positions 4-5: 47 = 2-door hardtop. Position 6: 9 = 1969. Position 7: plant (H = Flint). Positions 8-13: sequence.

The VIN cannot identify the GS package - build sheet and Protect-O-Plate do.

5 — Cowl / Fender-Tag Decoding

Cowl tag: ST 69, Riviera model numbers, trim, paint, build date.

Transmission should be the TH400 (not the Super Turbine 400) with 1969-appropriate date codes - a running-change detail worth verifying.

6 — Engines

Factory engine lineup

Engine

Compression

Horsepower

Torque

430 4-barrel (Riviera GS)

10.25:1

360 hp @ 5000

475 lb-ft @ 3200

430 4-barrel (Riviera GS) 430 cu in — bore 4.1875 in × stroke 3.90 in, 10.25:1 compression, 360 hp @ 5000, 475 lb-ft @ 3200, Rochester 4bbl. Engine code: -. Final year of the 430. Factory-derived specs per TA Performance.

7 — Transmissions

Transmission

Shifter

Notes

TH400 3-speed automatic

Console/column shift

New for 1969; replaces the Super Turbine 400

8 — Axles, Suspension & Brakes

Rear axle ratios

Ratio

Code / Application

Notes

2.93-3.42

Standard range

Typical Riviera fitments; verify on the stamp