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1964 Buick Skylark Restoration Guide

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1964 Buick Skylark

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

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

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1964 Buick Skylark

About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1964 Buick Skylark — one model, one year, nothing else. Every specification in this guide was checked against marque references, factory literature excerpts, and enthusiast documentation before it was written.

Our operating ethic is simple: we don't lie and we don't steal, we offer value. That means three things for this guide. First, no invented specifications — every number has a source. Second, where reputable sources disagree, the disagreement is disclosed in the text and in the Sources, Conflicts & Omissions section rather than papered over. Third, where a detail could not be verified, it is omitted and the omission is recorded — an honest gap beats a confident fabrication.

How to use this guide: start with the VIN and Fisher Body cowl-tag decoding sections to establish exactly what your car was when it left the factory. Use the engine, transmission, axle, paint, and casting sections to verify that what is on the car today matches what should be there. Use the rust and restoration-sequence sections to plan the work. And keep this guide in the shop — it is a working document, not a coffee-table book.

A final note: these cars are sixty years old. Parts have been swapped, tags have been lost, and memories have faded. Trust the metal — casting numbers, date codes, and stampings — over stories. When in doubt, photograph everything and verify against the factory service manual for your year.

1. Manufacturer History: Buick

Buick is the oldest surviving American automobile brand still in production, founded in 1903 — and the company that made General Motors possible. When William C. Durant took control of the struggling Buick Motor Company in 1904, he turned its valve-in-head engine into a sales sensation, then used Buick's profits as the foundation to assemble General Motors in 1908. Every GM division that followed was built, in a real sense, on Buick's earnings. The brand's early identity — refined power, engineering substance, quiet prestige — was set in that first decade and never really left.

The 1950s made Buick a style leader: Harley Earl's shop produced the 1951 XP-300 and LeSabre show cars, tailfins grew, and the V8 replaced the straight-eight in 1953 with the first 'nailhead' — the vertical-valve V8 whose tiny valves gave it its nickname and whose enormous torque made it a legend.

The 1960s were Buick's performance coming-of-age. The 1963 Riviera invented the American personal-luxury coupe; the 1965 Skylark Gran Sport put Buick in the muscle-car fight; and the 1970 GSX Stage 1 produced what many consider the ultimate expression of the breed — 510 lb-ft of torque from a 455 that was deliberately underrated.

Buick's engineering culture was distinct within GM: a fixation on torque over advertised horsepower (the famous 'Wildcat 445' and 'Wildcat 465' air-cleaner decals stated torque, not displacement), the switch-pitch torque converter, the Super Turbine automatics, and engines — the nailhead, the 400/430/455 big-blocks — that were built heavier and torquier than their corporate cousins. For the restorer, Buick's relative rarity is a double-edged sword: fewer cars survived than Chevelles or GTOs, but 1964 Buick Skylark the Buick Club of America, the GS clubs, and specialists like TA Performance and nailheadbuick.com have kept parts and knowledge alive.

The 1970s brought the end of the high-compression era across the industry, and Buick adapted with the 231 V6 and, eventually, the turbocharged Grand National — the brand's second performance golden age. The Riviera ran until 1999, the Skylark until 1998. Today the 1963-1973 Rivieras and the 1965-1972 Gran

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e cornerstone collector cars: luxurious, torquey, and still — by muscle-car standards — undervalued. Factory-correct restoration of these cars rewards patience, because the documentation exists if you know where to look, and the cars themselves were built to a standard their prices never quite reflected.

2. Model History: Buick Skylark

The Skylark began as a 1953-54 limited-production convertible — Buick's contribution to GM's trio of dream-car convertibles — then returned in 1961 as the top trim of Buick's new compact Special. When the Special/Skylark moved to the intermediate GM A-body platform for 1964, the Skylark became the uplevel intermediate line: the car a buyer chose over the Special for more trim, more standard equipment, and more engine. That positioning — the civilized intermediate — defined the Skylark for its entire run.

The 1964-65 Skylarks were clean, crisp A-bodies with the 225 V6 standard and the 300 small-block V8 optional — sensible, well-built intermediates that sold in volume. The 1965 Gran Sport option (a Skylark with the 401 nailhead) proved the A-body could be a muscle car, and the 1966-67 cars grew more formal while the new 340 V8 replaced the 300 in the lineup. For 1968 the Skylark became its own series within a redesigned A-body, with the new 350 small-block and a split wheelbase (112-inch two-doors, 116-inch four-doors).

The base Skylarks were never the headline cars — the GS got the glory — but they are the honest middle of the Buick intermediate line: the cars most buyers actually drove, and today the most affordable entry into the 1960s Buick A-body world. A correct base Skylark restoration is a study in restraint: the right V6 or small-block, the right trim, and the discipline to resist turning it into something it never was. This guide series covers the base Skylark and Skylark Custom for 1964-1968.

3. What Makes the 1964 Unique

First year of the intermediate A-body Skylark — the Skylark moved off the compact Special platform onto the new GM intermediate architecture shared with the Chevelle, GTO/LeMans, and 442/Cutlass.

Engine lineup: the 225 V6 standard, with the 300 small-block V8 in 210-hp 2-barrel and 250-hp 4-barrel versions optional. No Gran Sport this year — the GS option arrived in 1965.

1964-only details: first-year A-body trim, scripts, and interior. The convertible (10,225 built) is the most collectible 1964 Skylark body. Verify all trim against 1964 sales literature — 1964 and 1965 parts do not all interchange.

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Transmission choices included the 3-speed manual standard, the ST-300 2-speed automatic, and the optional Borg-Warner T-10 4-speed.

4. VIN Decoding

The 1964-65 Buick VIN uses the pre-1965 letter-code system. The plate is on the driver's door hinge pillar.

Decode it left to right:

Position
Meaning
First digit
'4' = Buick division.
Second/third
Series: '43' = Skylark (1964-65). Verify series codes in the factory service manual.

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