

FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1968 Mercury Cougar Restoration Guide

Read these pages exactly as they appear in the full guide.
Nothing here is rewritten or summarised — it is the product itself,
so you can judge the depth before you spend a dollar.

The full guide: <https://restoreessentials.com/product/RE-GD-MERCURY-COUGAR-1968>

RestorationEssentials — instant PDF download after checkout.



RESTORATIONESSENTIALS

1968 Mercury Cougar

Factory-Correct Restoration Guide

Key facts at a glance

Wheelbase	111 in — XR-7G and GT-E one-year specials
Engines	289/302/390 V8s; 427 GT-E (390 hp); 428 Cobra Jet (335 hp)
Transmissions	3-speed manual, 4-speed manual, 3-speed automatic
Production	113,720 (sources vary; see Conflicts) Identifier VIN 8T91_/8T92_ — W-code 427 and R-code 428 CJ cars Single-year coverage. Factory-correct...

restorationessentials.polsia.app

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

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



About This Guide

This is the RestorationEssentials factory-correct restoration guide for the 1968 Mercury Cougar — 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 fender-tag (or door data plate) 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: Mercury

Mercury was founded in 1938 by Edsel Ford to fill the gap between Ford and Lincoln — a medium-priced car with a little more style and a little more power than a Ford. The first Mercury used a 239-cubic-inch flathead V8 (95 hp to Ford's 85) and promptly became the darling of the nascent hot-rod scene; a chopped '49 Mercury remains the definitive custom car.

The 1950s and early 1960s saw Mercury yo-yo between identities — briefly pushed upmarket, then back down — but the mid-1960s gave it a genuine performance voice. The Comet, Mercury's compact, grew teeth: the Cyclone package turned it into a credible performance car, and when the Comet moved to the intermediate Fairlane platform for 1966, the Cyclone GT's 390-cubic-inch V8 made Mercury a real player in the muscle market. The 1967 Cougar gave Mercury its own pony car.

Mercury's muscle cars were always Fords underneath, which is a gift to the restorer: engines (small-block Windsor, FE big-block, 385-series 429), transmissions (Toploader four-speed, C4/C6 automatics), and 9-inch rear axles interchange across the Ford corporate parts bin, and Ford's Master Parts Catalog plus Marti Reports (built from Ford's own production database) make documentation unusually solid for a 1960s brand.

The 1970s turned Mercury toward personal luxury (Cougar XR-7, Marquis), and the brand gradually lost its distinct identity, becoming a slightly dressed-up Ford. Ford discontinued Mercury in 2011. But the 1964-1971 Cyclones — from the Comet-based originals to the aero-warrior Spoiler II — remain some of 1968 Mercury Cougar

the most distinctive and underappreciated muscle cars of the era, and correct restoration rewards the owner with a car that stands out at any show.

2. Model History: Mercury Cougar

The Cougar was Mercury's answer to the Mustang — but it was never a rebadged Mustang. Built on a 111-inch wheelbase (three inches longer than the Mustang), the 1967 Cougar was positioned as the



man's pony car: more refined, more luxurious, and more distinctive, with the two features that defined it from day one — vacuum-operated concealed headlamps and full-width sequential taillamps. It was an immediate hit: nearly 151,000 sold in its first year.

The XR-7 trim made the Cougar's luxury case with its woodgrain dash, toggle switches, and overhead console, while the GT package made its performance case. The one-year-only specials — the 1968 XR-7G (Dan Gurney's signature edition) and the GT-E with the 427 — are the blue-chip early Cougars. For 1969 the Cougar added a convertible and the Eliminator performance package (including the Boss 302), and for 1970 it carried the muscle formula to its peak with the 351 Cleveland and the 428 Cobra Jet. For 1971 the Cougar was redesigned on a 112-inch wheelbase with exposed headlights — the hidden lamps were gone — and the Eliminator was dropped. The 1971 cars are bigger, heavier, and more luxurious, with the 429 Cobra Jet topping the lineup. The 1967-1970 cars in this series are the classic Cougars: the hidden-headlamp, sequential-taillamp cars that defined Mercury's pony-car identity.

3. What Makes the 1968 Unique

The 1968 Cougar is the muscle year — the year Mercury stuffed the biggest engines ever offered in a Cougar into the 111-inch-wheelbase body. The 427 (7.0 liters, 390 horsepower, W-code) powered the one-year-only GT-E; the 428 Cobra Jet (335 horsepower, R-code) arrived mid-year and gave the Cougar genuine street credibility. The 1968 engine lineup ran the full table: 289 two-barrel, 302 two- and four-barrel, 390 two- and four-barrel GT, 427, and 428 Cobra Jet.

The one-year specials are the 1968 Cougar's blue chips: the GT-E (with the 427, and later the 428) and the XR-7G — Dan Gurney's signature edition, with the Gurney bubble hood scoop, driving lights, and special trim. Both were 1968-only, both are heavily cloned, and both demand documentation: verify the VIN's engine code (W for the 427, R for the 428 CJ), the data plate, and the Marti report before paying any GT-E or XR-7G premium. A Gurney scoop and badges do not make an XR-7G.

The 302 replaced the 289 during 1968 (the 289 two-barrel early, the 302 two-barrel late) — a running change the restorer must respect: date-code the engine against the build date, because a 302 in an early-1968 car is wrong and a 289 in a late-1968 car is equally wrong. The 390 GT continued as the volume performance engine.

Production is reported as 113,720 in the commonly cited marque history, with 113,741 in one secondary source — see Conflicts. For the restorer, the 1968 Cougar's traps are the running-change engine details, 1968 Mercury Cougar

the one-year-special authentication, and the 1968-only trim specifics: verify the VIN, the data plate, and the build date before paying any premium.

Year-to-year changes at a glance.

- 302 replaces the 289 during the year (running change — date-code the engine).
- 427 GT-E (390 hp) and XR-7G — both one-year-only specials.
- 428 Cobra Jet arrives mid-year (335 hp).
- Production: 113,720 cars.

4. VIN Decoding

1968 Cougar VINs read 8T91C (shown with the 289 two-barrel, early 1968). Verified 1968 engine codes include C (289-2V), F (302-2V), J (302-4V), S (390-4V GT), W (427-4V GT-E), R (428 CJ-4V).

Position

Meaning

Codes / Notes

Position 1