



PORSCHE 356 REGISTRY



THINKING ABOUT A PORSCHE 356?

An Introduction for Interested Enthusiasts.

THINKING ABOUT BUYING A PORSCHE 356?

A Practical Starting Guide for Potential Buyers



Welcome

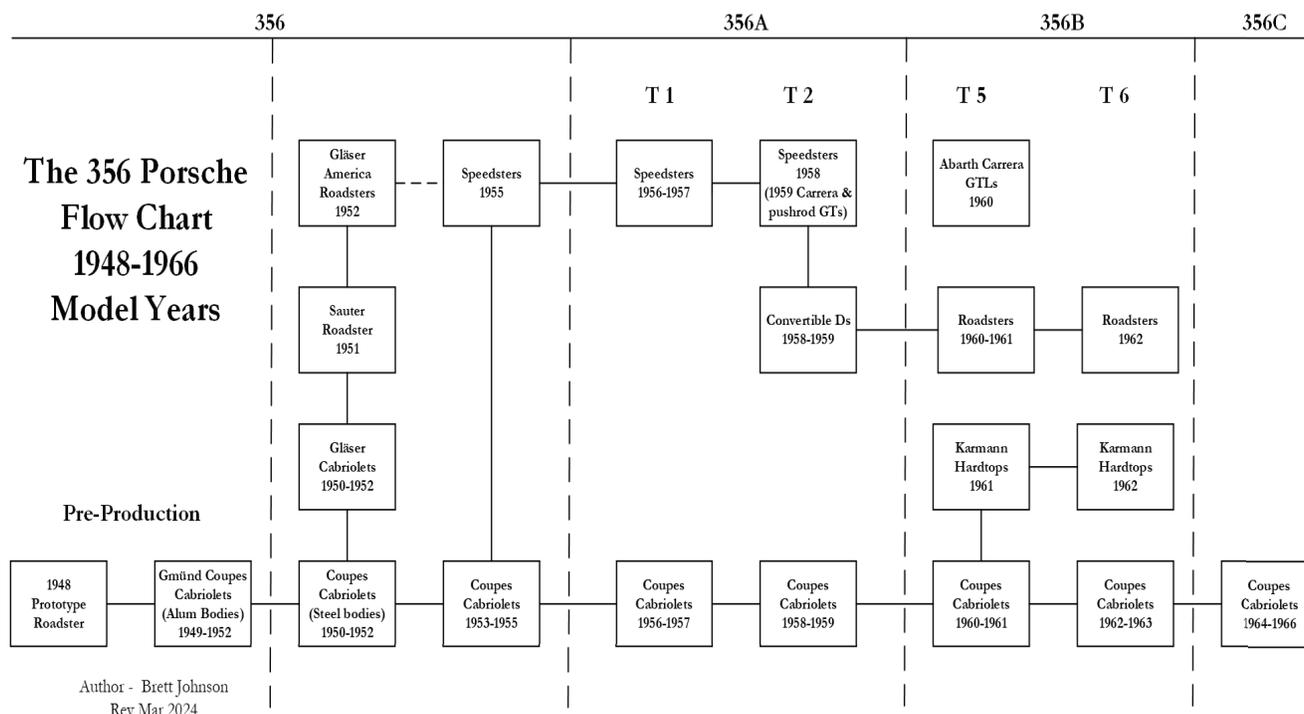
The Porsche 356 holds a special place in automotive history. It was the company's first production model. Its success paved the way financially for the 911 and defined the Porsche brand. Lightweight, simple, and full of character, the 356 offers a driving experience that feels uniquely connected to the road.

If you're considering one, this guide will help you understand the basics. It's meant to give you a clear starting point. If you'd like to go deeper, a very detailed buying guide is available at the end.

What Is a Porsche 356?

Built from 1948 through 1965, the 356 went through four major versions: Pre-A, A, B, and C, offered in coupes and convertible models. Engines were aircooled with most powered by a 1.6L making from 60-95 DIN HP. Porsche built the mechanicals while the bodies were outsourced to coachbuilders such as Reutter, Karmann, and Drauz.

Condition and originality vary widely from car to car these days, but all 356s share the same fundamental traits: a small, rear-engine layout, air-cooled engine, and a reputation for charm, drivability, and craftsmanship.



Overview of Porsche 356 Models

The first Porsche 356s were built in Gmünd, Austria, from 1948 to 1950 with hand-formed aluminum bodies. Light and simple, these early cars were built largely by hand. Most were coupes, though a few cabriolets were constructed.

When production moved to Stuttgart in 1950, Porsche adopted steel bodies. Lacking ability to build these bodies, Porsche relied on independent coachbuilders to fabricate and finish shells, returning them for final assembly. Reutter was the primary supplier. Gläser, Drauz, D'Ieteren, and Karmann handled specific body styles or short runs, often having subtle styling differences.

Body styles primarily fell into three categories. Coupes were the most common and offered a weather tight, practical design. Cabriolets provided open air motoring in a luxurious, well-trimmed package with full weather protection. The sporting line included the Speedster, introduced as a 1955 model, with a low windshield, side curtains, and minimal amenities, followed by the more comfortable Convertible D (1958) and Roadster (1960).

The first steel cars referred to as Pre-As (1950-1955) are identified by two-piece windshields, vertical-stacked taillights, and incorporated bumpers. All of these areas changed during the first few evolutionary years.

The 356A (1956-1959) launched with the T 1 body and morphed to T 2 during 1957 with mid-year bumper modifications, teardrop taillights and dual exhausts exiting through the rear bumper guards. The Convertible D by Drauz with a taller windshield and roll up windows was introduced mid-1958.

The 356B (1960-1963) commenced with T 5 configuration having higher bumpers and headlights with larger front turn signals. During this period Karmann built the first Hardtop coupe, a cabriolet body fitted with a permanent steel roof, produced in limited numbers. In 1962 the T 6 body replaced the T 5. It incorporated a larger rear window on coupes, twin deck lid grilles, an external fuel filler in the fender, and a squared off hood. Karmann continued a brief run of Hardtops in the T 6 series as did D'Ieteren with the Roadster. Karmann began building standard coupes in late 1961 alongside Reutter to meet growing demand.

The final model, the 356C (1964-1965), offered only as coupe and cabriolet, introduced four wheel disc brakes. In 1963 Porsche had purchased the body making facilities of Reutter, and by 1965 much of that capacity was dedicated to the new 911 and 912 models while continuing to build the remaining 356C cabriolets. Karmann continued building 356C coupes along with 911s and 912s.



What Makes a Good 356?

Condition matters more than anything else. A clean, well-maintained car is worth much more than one with shiny paint hiding structural problems. Rust is the biggest issue. These are unibody cars, and poor repairs can lead to expensive fixes.

Cars described as fully restored may not have received complete work, so look for documentation and ask what was actually done, and when. Most 356s have had repair and parts replaced over the years. What matters is the quality and honesty of the work.

Should I Buy a Project?

It is natural to consider buying a project car, thinking it might save money. In most cases, it does not. Restoring a 356 is expensive and time-consuming, and skilled shops often have long wait times. Basic body and paint work alone can exceed the cost of a well-sorted driver.

Although parts are readily available, unless you have the tools, experience, and interest in the process itself (don't



underestimate this), buying a complete ready to drive 356 in good condition is almost always the best option.

What Does Ownership Feel Like?

The Porsche 356 is a surprisingly sophisticated car for its era. It rides well even on rough roads and communicates the road in a way that feels connected but not harsh. The driving experience is simple, mechanical, and very engaging.

You sit low in the car. The steering is direct, and the response is clear and satisfying. A well-maintained 356 on a scenic road offers a uniquely rewarding drive.

It is not a modern luxury car. There is wind and road noise, and no air conditioning. Some passengers enjoy the simplicity while others may not. If possible, ride in one or take a short drive before making a decision.

How Much Should I Expect to Spend?

As of 2025, prices vary depending on model, body style, and condition.

Coupes are the most affordable. A good quality coupe can be found for under 100K, with decent examples starting around 70K. Open cars including Cabriolets, Speedsters, Roadsters, and Convertible Ds typically start around 120K and rise from there - and some exceed 300K.

Pre-A and early A models tend to be more expensive than later ones because fewer were made and they are in high demand among collectors. Special models like Carreras are even higher, they are probably not appropriate for most new owners due to their cost and engine complexity.

Keep in mind that asking prices are sometimes overly optimistic, especially in online dealer listings. A fresh paint job or vague restoration claim should always be backed by documentation. The market changes, so look at recent sales and get advice if you're unsure.

Where Do People Find These Cars?

Many 356s are sold online today. The challenge is knowing how to evaluate what you are seeing.

Bring a Trailer is the most active online auction platform. It includes detailed listings and useful comments from the community. Porsche 356 Registry and Porsche Club of America classifieds are only available to members, but often include better cars from long-time owners.

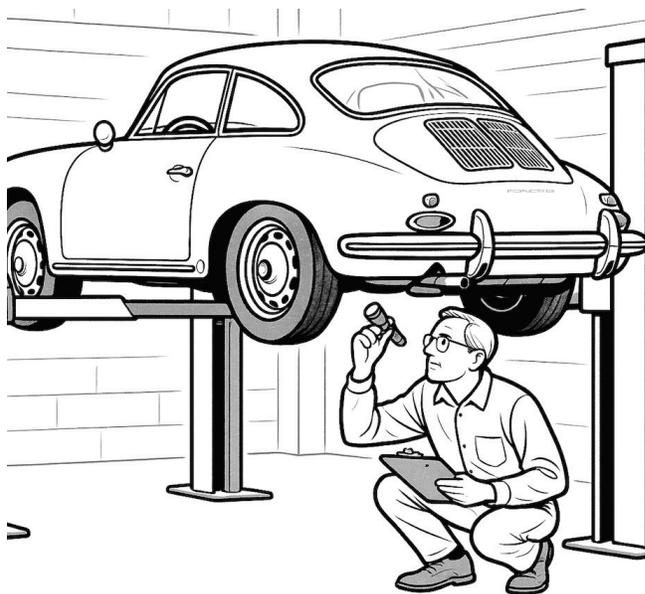
Facebook Marketplace sometimes lists 356s, but caution is required. Scams and misrepresented cars are common. Cars also sell through dealers, brokers, and private sellers.

Ask questions, request documentation, and be cautious if anything seems vague or rushed.

Getting Help Before You Buy

The newest 356 is sixty years old and the details matter. If you're new to the 356, it is smart to get advice.

Many experienced owners are happy to help. Some mechanics and consultants offer pre-purchase inspections or buyer support. A second opinion can help you avoid expensive surprises. If you're buying remotely, hiring someone near the car to inspect it is well worth the cost.



What Is the Porsche 356 Registry?

The Porsche 356 Registry is the club behind these beginners guides. Founded more than 50 years ago, it is the fifth-largest officially recognized Porsche club in the world, with over 6,500 members globally.

The Registry supports 356 owners and enthusiasts by providing technical knowledge, community, and resources to keep these cars on the road and to facilitate member experiences

Member benefits include:

- An online forum with decades of archived discussion
- A printed, full-color magazine six times per year
- Technical article library and factory documents
- Classifieds with member cars and hard-to-find parts
- Regional events and national meetups

You do not have to own a 356 to join. Many members start with curiosity and learn along the way. There is considerable free information as well at the website: <https://porsche356registry.org>

What Can You Do With a 356?



A Porsche 356 is more than a display piece. These cars are surprisingly usable and enjoyable, even many decades after they were built.

Drive it anywhere. With proper care, a 356 handles modern roads confidently. Many owners use them on long-distance rallies, mountain drives, and weekend tours.

Attend an event. The Porsche 356 community is active worldwide. The Registry hosts Holiday events each year, and many local groups organize scenic drives and gatherings. These events focus on enjoying the car, not just showing it.

Share it. Whether at Cars and Coffee or a Porsche Club event, the 356 always attracts attention. Its timeless design and character stand out.

Learn basic mechanics. The car's simplicity makes it a great platform for learning. Many owners do their own maintenance and enjoy sharing the experience with kids or grandkids.

Make it a family tradition. These cars often become part of a family's history, driven and maintained across generations.

Next Steps

If you are serious about considering a Porsche 356 or just beginning to explore the idea, the Porsche 356 Registry offers a buyer's guide that includes extensive, detailed advice about models, inspections, common upgrades, and what to look for. The full 18 page guide - "Purchasing a Porsche 356" is a free download, compliments of the Porsche 356 Registry.

Download the free 18-page guide to learn:

- How to avoid a costly impulse purchase by seeing the big picture before committing.
- Ways to spot hidden problems like rust, poor restorations, and overpriced cars with weak documentation.
- What really drives Porsche 356 values and how to judge if the price matches the condition and history.
- Signs that separate a solid car from one that only looks good in photos.
- Questions that reveal whether a seller is honest, knowledgeable, and transparent.
- Realistic price ranges for different models and conditions, based on actual sales.
- Safe buying practices such as inspections, written agreements, and escrow to protect your money.

Download link:

<https://porsche356registry.org/membership>

Final Thoughts

Buying a Porsche 356 takes some patience and preparation. These are special cars, and it helps to learn as much as you can before making a decision.

There is a lot to consider, and also a lot to enjoy along the way. You will find that Registry members are generous with their knowledge and willing to help. Many new own-

ers also discover lasting friendships through the shared interest in these cars.

Whether you're ready to start looking or just getting familiar, taking the time to understand the car and the community will make the experience better.

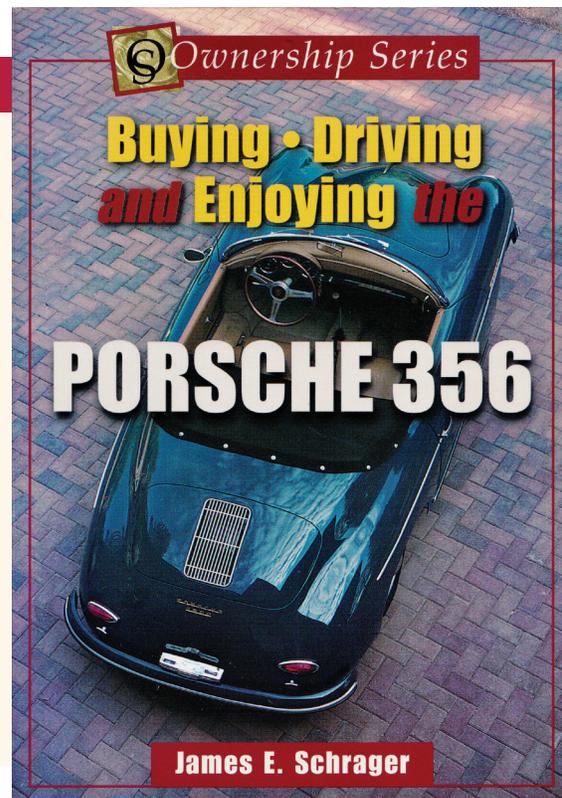
About the Porsche 356 Registry

Founded in 1974, the Porsche 356 Registry is the world's largest club dedicated to preserving and enjoying the Porsche 356. With over 6,500 members worldwide, we offer technical resources, a bimonthly magazine, classified ads, and access to a knowledgeable and welcoming community. Whether you're restoring a barn find, searching for the right car, or driving your 356 regularly, the Registry is here to help. Learn more at www.porsche356registry.org.

Book Offer

More information on the total Porsche 356 ownership experience can be learned from Jim Schrage's book "Buying, Driving, and Enjoying the Porsche 356". Learn more here at this link:

<https://porsche356registry.org/book>



Disclaimer: This guide is intended for general educational purposes only. While efforts have been made to ensure accuracy, the Porsche 356 Registry makes no guarantees regarding completeness, accuracy, or applicability to any specific situation. Buyers should conduct their own due diligence and consult qualified experts when evaluating a vehicle.



PORSCHE 356 REGISTRY



Learn more about membership
and how it can help you with your
356 journey.

TEL. +1 304-935-0356
email: membership@porsche356registry.org
visit us at www.porsche356registry.org
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