

1938 Cadillac Series 90 Fleetwood

2dr Convertible Coupe, 2/4-p. • 16-cyl. 431cid/185hp 2x1bbl

#1 Concours condition

\$350,000

– 0%

#2 Excellent condition

\$285,000

– 0%

#3 Good condition

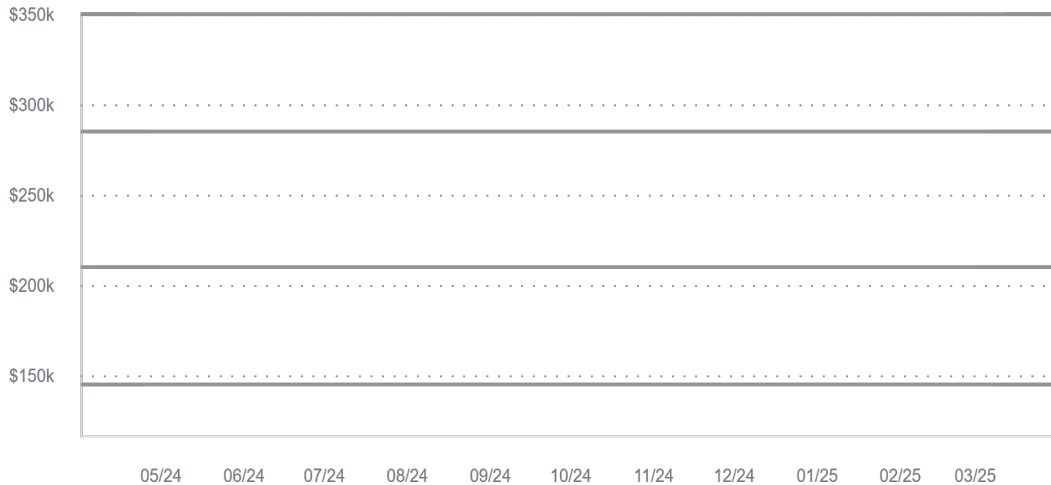
\$210,000*

– 0%

#4 Fair condition

\$145,000

– 0%



NOTE: The chart displays price changes for the last year.

Model description

Before the launch of its V16 Cadillac was resting on its laurels as “Standard of the World” as well as its landmark V8 from 1914. But the company was hard-pressed by Packard and Pierce Arrow’s V12 engines and up-and-coming Duesenberg’s DOHC straight eight.

So when company president Lawrence P. Fisher announced the fabulous Cadillac V16 Model 452 in December 1929, it looked like a home run. Coming only two months after Wall Street’s Black Tuesday crash, though, the timing could hardly be worse.

By the time the New York Auto Show rolled around on January 4th 1930, the Depression was starting to bite. Other luxury manufacturers and their wealthy customers might have had an inkling of what the next decade would bring, but few of them would see it through.

Only one of the mighty V16s was on view at the 1930 New York Auto Show, an Imperial Landau Sedan with a collapsible rear quarter. All bodies were by GM-owned coachbuilders Fisher and Fleetwood. Dozens of different body styles were offered, ranging from a 2/4 passenger Coupe at \$5350 to the 5/7 passenger 4-door Town Brougham at \$9700. The average house in 1930 cost \$6000, and a Chevrolet Coupe set you back \$495. U.S. wages averaged \$1368 a year, and that’s assuming you had a job, so the Cadillac V16 was aimed squarely at the upper crust.

The V16’s engine consisted of two overhead valve eight-cylinder engines back-to-back at a narrow 45-degree angle with a common crankshaft. Each bank had its own fuel pump and separate exhaust. Bore was three inches and stroke four inches for a displacement of 452 cubic inches – hence the model name. Horsepower was rated conservatively at 175-185 horsepower but the engine could propel vehicles weighing 6000 pounds or more to 100 mph.

Based presumably on a unit-cost margin, the semi-custom Fleetwood V16s were built in two factories – the original one in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania (hence the name) and a new Detroit factory. Origin can be immediately determined by the windshield – Pennsylvania cars have a vee-windshield while Detroit cars have a flat, angled one. PA-built cars are far rarer.

*Please note: All prices shown here are based on various data sources, as detailed in [About Our Prices](#). For all Hagerty clients: The values shown do not imply coverage in this amount. In the event of a claim, the Guaranteed Value(s)[®] on your policy declarations page is the amount your vehicle(s) is covered for, even if the value displayed here is different. If you would like to discuss your policy, please call us at 877-922-3391.

Cadillac sold 2500 V16s of all types for 1930, but the numbers trailed off from there. The ongoing Depression made expensive luxury automobiles harder and harder to sell, and Cadillac's own launch of the V12 in late 1930 critically undercut the V16. The V12 was a smaller 368 cubic-inch version of the V16 with four fewer cylinders. Prices ranged from \$3795 for the Fisher-bodied roadster to \$4895 for the All-weather Phaeton.

Sales for the V16s were sufficiently small that some cars can be identified by the original owner's name. For example in 1930-31 – significantly the most popular years – many models attracted fewer than 100 buyers. Big sedans proved the most popular, suggesting that most buyers were unlikely to drive themselves.

Best seller was the Model 4375-S 7-passenger sedan lineup with 438 sold. It was followed by the 4330-S 5-passenger Sedan, of which 394 were built, and the Model 4361-S Club Sedan with 258 sold. The Model 4380 All-Weather Phaeton followed with 250 built.

At the other end of the scale, only two buyers purchased a 4285 Victoria, three bought the 4280 Convertible Sedan and just one bought a 4257 5-passenger Touring Car. Two others opted for a 4361-S Imperial Club sedan with a divider window.

As the Depression deepened Cadillac concentrated more and more on a wide range of V8s, including the lower-priced LaSalle, which had been introduced in 1927. In so doing, it improved its chances of survival as other luxury carmakers fell by the wayside. By the time the final V16 was sold in 1940 Cadillac had seen the demise of all its luxury competitors except Packard and Lincoln. Closed doors included Auburn, Cord, Duesenberg, Franklin, Marmon, Peerless, Pierce-Arrow, and Stutz. Even Rolls-Royce closed its American factory in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1931.

Through its production run V16 models continued to get bigger, adopting a 154-inch wheelbase in 1934 – the longest ever on a production car. V16 prices were cut by \$200 in 1935 but since the base 2/4 passenger coupe cost \$7550 it was a negligible gesture.

For 1936 Cadillac renamed all its models, including the V16 which was now called the Series 90. Only about were built and the market was turning to pocket-sized classics such as Lincoln's Zephyr and Packard's 120 model.

The year 1938 brought a brand-new V16 engine. An extraordinary design, it is a flathead 135-degree V16 with 431 cubic inch displacement developing the same 185 bhp as the original while weighing 250 pounds less. It is also low enough to tuck under the firewall at the rear.

Only 12 semi-custom bodies were offered for these later V16s, all on a new 141-inch wheelbase. The flagship Sixteen (as Cadillac now referred to it) was known as the Series 90, and was fundamentally unchanged through the 1940 model year. Prices ranged from \$5335 for a 2-passenger Coupe to \$7170 for the 7-passenger Town Car.

The numbers of each model sold tell the story. For example, in 1938 only 10 Convertible Coupes were sold. Ten 2-passenger Coupes found buyers that year, followed by seven in 1939 and two in 1940. Only 19 Convertible sedans were built in three years, 13 of them in 1938.

The most popular style was the huge 7-passenger Imperial Touring Sedan, which accounted for 175 sales in three years. Meanwhile, the smaller 5-passenger Sedan found 67 buyers in the same period, including seven Imperial models. For the wealthy who didn't want to be seen, 23 Town Sedans with blind rear quarters were constructed. Twenty were sold in 1938 but only two in 1939 and one in 1940.

While the timing of the V16 was unfortunate from a market perspective, it was an engineering marvel upon its introduction and is still one of only a handful of 16-cylinder automobiles to be produced. It also delivered a level of prestige to Cadillac, which was able to outlast much of its competition during the Great Depression. Today, depending on body style and provenance, 16-cylinder Cadillacs are among the most desirable and valuable prewar automobiles.

Body styles

2dr Convertible Coupe, 2/4-p.	4dr Convertible Sedan, 5-p	4dr Formal Sedan, 7-p.	4dr Imperial Sedan, 7-pass.
4dr Sedan, 5-pass.	4dr Touring Sedan, 7-p.	4dr Town Sedan, 5-p.	

Engine types

16-cyl. 431cid/185hp 2x1bbl

1938-1940 Cadillac Sixteen stats

Highest sale	Lowest sale	Most recent sale	Sales
\$616,000	\$11,000	\$41,800	84

Vehicle's condition classification

#1. Concours

#1 vehicles are the best in the world. Imagine the best vehicle, in the right colors, driving onto the lawn at the finest concours. Perfectly clean, the vehicle has been groomed down to the tire treads. Painted and chromed surfaces are mirror-like. Dust and dirt are banned, and materials used are correct and superbly fitted.

#2. Excellent

#2 vehicles could win a local or regional show. They might even be former #1 vehicles that have been driven or have aged. Seasoned observers will have to look closely for flaws but will be able to find some. The paint, chrome, glass and finishes will all appear as excellent. The vehicle drives as a new vehicle of its era would.

#3. Good

#3 vehicles drive and run well but are not used for daily transportation. The casual passerby will not find any visual flaws, but these vehicles might have some incorrect parts. #3 vehicles could possess some, but not all, of the issues of a #4 vehicle, but they will be balanced by other factors such as fresh paint or a new, correct interior.

#4. Fair

#4 vehicles are daily drivers, with flaws visible to the naked eye. The chrome might have pitting, the windshield might be chipped and perhaps the body has a minor dent. Imperfect paintwork, split seams or a cracked dash might be present. No major parts are missing, but there might be non-stock additions. A #4 vehicle can also be a deteriorated restoration.