

Stylish at any speed

## **Kit: Chevy Corvair Corsa**

By AMOS KWON

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The Corsa was a sophisticated and sporty coupe that looks even better today, with far more panache points than its ordinary Corsa brother. It's a car Don Draper would drive, perfectly at home in both LA and Manhattan. The Corsa was a gentleman's car, for sure, but it was plenty sporty, too; the potent flat six engine, crisp sheet metal and luxurious interior meant that not just anyone would look right in the driver's seat. You'll need to look the part — neat and clean, 1960s business style — while you cruise around in yours, and we've got the perfect kit.

## **Why the Chevrolet Corvair Corsa Is Collectable**

by Yoav Gilad / 19 May 2014



Photography by Josh Clason for Petrolicious

The Collector is a weekly series produced in association with Gear Patrol, where we discuss the car, and [Gear Patrol](#) discusses the essential gear inspired by the car. ([Click here](#) to see the rest of The Collector Series on Petrolicious.)

It seems you can't mention the Chevrolet Corvair without mentioning Mr. Ralph Nader. Yes, his consumer safety campaign effectively killed the car and yes, there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the car. So, now that we've mentioned him, let's move on and discuss the Corvair. Simply put, it was revolutionary for an American car in that era.

Detroit effectively had one kind of car in the early sixties, the kind that was so massive it generated its own gravitational field. But the Corvair was conceived to compete with the silly, little imports that some confused Americans were intent on buying. Not only that, but the engine was rear-mounted allowing a completely flat floor pan and an improved interior package. Introduced in 1960 to an eager public, the Corvair soldiered on through 1969 facing stiff competition from all of GM's rivals as well as some of General Motors own products (such as the Camaro). And none of those cars had any negative press surrounding them.

But whether you believe that the criticism was warranted or that people simply didn't know how to safely operate a rear-engined car with a swing-axle suspension there was one special edition particularly worth noting: the Corvair Corsa. It debuted as a special edition when the second generation Corvair bowed, in 1965. The base Corvair had a 95hp powerplant and there was an optional 110hp engine too. But the Corsa was fitted with a 140hp engine (with four single barrel carbs). If this *still* wasn't enough, Chevy offered an optional 180hp (!) turbocharged mill. And there was also an optional four-speed manual transmission when the turbocharged engine was selected.

As an aside, the Corvair has more in common with the Porsche 911 than many people know. Besides sharing a basic rear-engine, rear-wheel drive architecture, they were both powered by a flat-six engine and had a swing-axle suspension in the rear (the Corvair eventually shifted to an independent rear). In fact, the Corvair was frequently marketed and reviewed as the 'Poor-man's Porsche' (despite initially having two extra cylinders).

Not only could the Corsa pack 180hp, but it also included larger brakes borrowed from the Chevelle, a stronger differential ring gear, a Delcotron alternator (replacing the generator), and significant chassis refinements were made. In addition, a Special Purpose Chassis Equipment ("Z17") handling package, consisting of a special performance suspension and quick ratio steering box, was an interesting new option for 1965.

Sadly, the Corsa was short-lived, remaining in production for only two years. But a relatively short production run coupled with the most powerful engine for the model means that it is the most collectable model and will easily remain so.

If you'd like to check current values on Chevy Corvair Corsas, or other cars, click [here](#).

Thank you to owner Mike Fiscus for allowing us to photograph his 1965 Corvair.



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## KILLED BY THE CAMARO

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The Corvair Corsa lasted only two short years, but in that time it won accolades for its great driving dynamics in the face of competitors like the Ford Mustang and the Plymouth Barracuda. It was the first American car with a monocoque chassis. Plus, it had full independent suspension like a sophisticated European car. Sadly, when the far more in-your-face Camaro was born, the Corsa was killed by Chevy as the top of the line Corvair. And though the '67 Camaro was American badass-ness, the Corvair Corsa was easily the classier ride.

Written by Amos Kwon of [Gear Patrol](#)









**1965  
CHEVROLET**

# **CORVAIR** CORSA

**THE COLLECTOR SERIES**  
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- Wow so many great pics of this lovely beauty. I for one have always been a huge corvair fan since the first generation came out. One of the biggest reasons why i liked them was because they were so different then almost any other American car at the time. Rear engined, fully independent suspension, turbocharger option just to name a few items it had. I also believe that the second gen corvair was one of the best looking american car at the time this side of the stingray. I always looked to the corvair as basically a European style concept but with a American design and flare and Chevy almost

pulled it off. Lets also not forget what Don Yenke and others have been able to do with corvair on the race track. Its a shame not enough people bought them to keep it going but you can never underestimate the power of a cheap v8 and long hood I.E Mustang which out sold the corvair.

- Very Beautiful car, Mike should be a very proud owner.
- Truly, a fine looking automobile. This second generation Corvair has a beautiful body style and great lines. First generations should not be overlooked, also. I love the license plate - VAIRNUT. Congratulations to Mike Fiscus on this car and a great feature in The Collector series.
- It should be noted for the unfamiliar that the ring gear configuration was the same diameter for all models of the Corvair, and that car pictured has the 140HP engine option, not the 180 HP one.
- Wow. Great to see the '65 Corsa featured here. I owned the '65 140HP four carb version in light metallic blue with a white interior. I think that '65 was the pinnacle of the Corvair. Starting in '66 GM began to decontent the equipment. You can see the first blush of cost savings by looking at the rear lower body panel. In '65 there were two aluminum grills. I think that in '66 it became one painted grill. That was an absolutely incredible car and I wish I still had it. Unfortunately the tin worm took a serious interest in mine. When you mention that you owned a Corvair people look at you funny. They simply had no idea just how well engineered this car was. Kudos to GM for bringing it to market.
- Great car. Love the "Hurst" style shifter knob. I had an uncle that dabbled in Corvairs for a while until he picked up a somewhat ratty, but very fast 67 Camaro SS that I used to love to go for rides in. The comparison to Porsche's is certainly justified. Just a mild correction to the story, Porsche 356's had swing axle rear suspensions, but 911's, while retaining torsion bars, had independent rear suspension. At any rate, the Corvair was a car ahead of it's time and it's too bad GM couldn't keep developing and selling it.
- I owned 2 65's both convertibles. The first creme yellow with black top.. bought brand new at age 19. Really a great car.. maybe someday I'll have another. Sigh, so many cars, so little room!

### **Mike Fiscus**

- Corvairs are great cars! I owned the feature car for 33 years! Thanks for all the positive comments.