



Special thanks to the Gateway Canyons Auto Museum and Museum Curator David Dormaier for granting access to this stunning Brilliant Polar White and Custom Orange example.

## The 1953 Oldsmobile Fiesta

HIGH-PRICED SPORTS CARS were the cat's meow in the early 1950s. Sexy, swanky entries from Europe were turning heads and capturing hearts in the car-buying public. The small, but growing fad wasn't lost on Oldsmobile. In 1953, they tested the waters with a stunning, sporty convertible of their own. They called it Fiesta—debuting the upscale vehicle at that year's General Motors Motorama. The traveling car show spectacle toured the country in front of an estimated 1.4 million spectators. It kicked off in late January at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel and featured over-the-top entertainment and music. There was a 24-piece orchestra, choral singing, ballet, and even a fashion show—all on a two-level, mechanized stage. It was the perfect setting to release the Fiesta.

The drop-top was a factory-altered Olds 98 and touted as 'truly out of this world,' the 'custom car of the future,' and 'the merriest, most magnificent Oldsmobile ever built.' The car's low-sweeping profile had numerous body modifications including cut down and altered doors, windshield, roof, and rear quarter panels. It sat lower than every other Olds model; its beltline was nearly three inches lower than a 98's.

The panoramic windshield curved beyond the door line, requiring the car's hood, front fenders, cowl, and dash to be modified. Special 'spinner' wheel discs mimicked airplane propellers and were crafted out of solid stainless steel. Inside the luxurious cabin, every power option found on the 98 was standard, including power steering, brakes, windows, top, and seat. Hand-buffed leather covered the custom lounge cushions for an ultra-plush ride. Power came from Olds' 'Rocket' V-8, fitted with a larger carb, air cleaner, and exhaust manifolds for greater performance.

The limited-edition Fiesta was pricey and only 458 were made in its one-year run. It succeeded at its goal which wasn't volume, but momentum. Because of the Korean War, sales had slumped, but efforts like the flashy Fiesta helped the brand rebound.

Weeks after its New York release, Olds dealers reported a record surge of interest, a big bump in orders, and a flood of requests for demonstrations of those whiz-bang power features. By year's end, overall Olds sales were up 35 percent. The company's gamble had paid off. The dreamy Fiesta offered a glimpse into the future of Olds and it was one car shoppers liked. 

### Collectible Insights

The Fiesta retailed new for \$5,715. According to Hagerty Insurance, a vehicle like this that is in pristine, Concours quality condition would be valued at \$211,000.

### Barrington Cruise Nights

Barrington's family fun Cruise Nights are held every Thursday from now until August 1 at 6:30 p.m. in the Harris Bank Parking lot at Cook and Station Streets (just south of Lake-Cook Rd.) Each Cruise Night has a theme and there is something for everyone at this popular event. Learn more at [www.enjoybarrington.com](http://www.enjoybarrington.com).



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