

1960 Pontiac Ventura

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Visually, the 1960 Pontiac Ventura shared much with the rest of the Pontiac line. It was the second year of the the highly touted "Wide-Track" platform, introduced for 1959. As such, the styling was updated from the year before. While the basic platform was unchanged and everything above the beltline remained the same, the lower sheetmetal was new.

Up front, a conventional full-width horizontal-bar grille design replaced the split-grille theme used on 1959 Pontiacs. The new look featured a forward-thrusting center section that was vee'd at the center and framed the horizontal quad headlamps and small round turn signals.

The hood design was also new. It picked up the "V" shape of the grille and the crease formed at its leading edge was carried back to the middle of the front doors. A similar line sprouted in the middle of the rear doors on four-door cars (or just aft of the portals on two-door models) and was carried back to the taillamp panel.

The taillamps themselves were two small round units per side that were faired into "tubes" on the deck panel, giving the impression of small rockets built into the tail. The lower rear panel was attractively sculpted and also housed the optional horizontal back-up lamps at the far ends. The decklid was quite long and flat, almost appearing large enough to land a small airplane. This updating below the beltline, combined with the wraparound windshield and backlight, effectively bridged the gap between the rather bulbous designs of the Fifties and the more angular designs that were to come.

The main external differences between the Ventura and the other 1960 Pontiacs were the Ventura scripts on the front fenders and block-letter series identification on the rear panel. Like the Catalina, the Ventura's sides had a simple midbody spear of brightwork that ran the length of the car. (Bonnevilles and Star Chiefs featured additional adornments on their rear quarter panels.)

While the 1960 Pontiac's front-end design was clean and very attractive, the loss of the split-grille theme did, in fact, water down its identity a bit. It just did not scream "Pontiac" like the 1959s did. It could just as easily have been used on that year's Oldsmobile, and was actually similar in layout to that of the 1960 Oldsmobile.

The Ventura hardtop coupe used an arcing roof, while the hardtop sedan used a flat-top design with a slight rear overhang. Both roofs, which were shared with other General Motors makes, featured very slender rear pillars and expansive rear windows that lent an open, airy feel to the interiors that just wasn't possible with pillared designs.

The interior was both visually appealing and luxurious. Unlike the Star Chief, which brought more-spartan Catalina-like upholstery to the larger 124-inch Bonneville chassis, the Ventura combined an upscale Bonneville-inspired interior with the smaller Catalina platform.

The 1960 Pontiac dash panel, while similar to the unit used in 1959, was revised somewhat with a new gauge cluster fitting into the same dash opening. A horizontal speedometer with four small round gauges underneath replaced the three large round gauges used the year before. Venturas also featured an aluminum faceplate across the passenger side of the dash, accented with a gold script.

The Ventura's tri-tone Morrokide upholstery in a vertically pleated pattern gave a tasteful splash of color to the interior without a hint of gaudiness. The upholstery was slightly different, with a Catalina/Ventura crest on the upper seat-backs of both front and rear seats. Bucket seats, while originally intended to be a Bonneville-only option, eventually were expanded to the Ventura line as well. In order to maintain a sense of pecking order between the Ventura and the top-of-the line Bonneville, all Venturas, regardless of seating choices, used the same side-panel design as the Star Chief.