



Automotive History Preservation Society
P.O. Box 467
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1958 DESOTO CARS DESCRIBED

1958 DESOTO - GENERAL: 1958 DeSoto styling was a minor facelift from the 1957 models. Changes included a honeycomb grille insert, a dip in the center of the middle grille bar and round parking lights at the outboard ends of the lower grille opening. Dual headlamps were standard on all models.

For the first time, Fireflite, Firedome and Firesweep all offered an expanded model line including convertibles, hardtops and 4-door sedans, less station wagons. Wagons were only available in the Fireflite and Firesweep line. Eighty-six two-tone and 14 solid color schemes were offered for 1958.

Biggest news was the introduction of the new "B" Series "corporate" V-8 engine, used across all lines except Chrysler.

INNOVATIONS: The new "B" series V-8 with wedge-shaped combustion chamber-head. It was the first of the new generation "corporate" V-8s, available in 350 and 361 CID the new cylinder heads and the distributor in the front of the engine for easier service. A full-flow oil filter was standard, which featured a rigid, deep-skirt block; in-line overhead valves employing a single shaft in each cylinder head. Its weight dropped to 640 pounds; less than the DeSoto-only Hemi it replaced. DeSoto, Dodge and Plymouth shared the new engine, with Chrysler continuing to use their big 392 CID Hemi.

1958 FIRESWEEP SERIES LS1-L (8-Cylinder wedge-head V-8): This series continued to use the Dodge chassis. Body side trim was redesigned so that the upper molding ran at an angle to the upper corner of the tailfin. There were "Firesweep" rear fender nameplates, and a continuous band of metal decorated the front lip of the hood and climbed over the headlamp hoods. Firesweep Sportsman models had the dome-like windshield seen on 1957 convertibles, while sedans continued with a visored windshield header.

An upgraded interior, matching those in the Firedome could be had in selected Firesweep models at extra cost., Electric windshield wipers were employed and the new "B" Series 350 CID V-8 wedge engine was fitted. A Power Pack 4-barrel carburetor option was available.

1958 FIREDOME SERIES LS2-M (8-Cylinder wedge-head V-8): The Firedome was basically unchanged for 1958. "Firedome" nameplates were placed on the rear fenders. All Firedome models had the same side trim as the lower priced Firesweeps, but the front molding treatment was different. "Windsplit" ornaments for tops of front fenders were an option.

The interior was upgraded over the Firesweep. Upholstery materials were defined as "Frontier Homespun" fabric (cowboys were a big thing in 1958) in combination with grained vinyl, all colored to harmonize with exterior finish. Firedomes used the new "B" series V-8 but with an increased displacement to 361 CID.

1958 FIREFLITE SERIES LS3-H (8-Cylinder wedge-head V-8): The top rung DeSoto series was identified by "Fireflite" rear fender nameplates and a distinctive upper body side molding which extended the full length of the car and incorporated special medallions on sides of front fenders. "Windsplit" fender-top ornaments were standard equipment. "Color Sweep" trim was standard on hardtops and convertibles.

Fireflite interiors were a step up from the Firedome and leather was an option on some models. The Fireflites used the same new "B" series 361 CID V-8 as the Firedome, but fitted with a 4-barrel carburetor.

A springtime trim package was released as an option for all models except Adventurers, and featured two groups of four vertical bright metal deck lid slashes affixed one group to each side of the recessed license plate housing. New exterior colors were announced about the same time. Fireflite interiors were done in metallic Damask and vinyl and incorporated integrated arm rests with aluminum finish recesses above.

1958 ADVENTURER SERIES LS3-S (8-Cylinder wedge-head V-8): The Adventurer models were still a Fireflite sub-series, but pure performance and luxury. Like the Fireflites, these high-performance cars came standard with Torqueflite transmission, backup lamps and full wheel covers, but there were some other extras that were standard: power brakes, dual exhausts, dual rear radio antenna, dual outside rear view mirrors, white sidewall tires, dashboard safety panel and special paint and trim. The latter included gold highlight surrounds, twin groupings of four deck lid bars, triangular rear side sweep inserts and special upholstery.

The Adventurer also used the same new "B" series 361 CID V-8, but was fitted with dual 4-barrel carburetors, and a camshaft upgrade but no cylinder head/valve increases over the Fireflite. It was rated at 345 HP. A radical new option was an electronic fuel injection system manufactured by Bendix which increased the output to 355 HP. Cars with fuel injection had special nameplates above the front fender medallions. Most were later recalled to the factory and converted back to Adventurer "standard" dual-quad carburetors due to the fuel injection system's unreliability.

MODEL/ENGINE I.D. DATA:

- **Firesweep serial numbers.** Cars built in Detroit had serial numbers that ran from LS1-1001 to 18900. Cars built in Los Angeles had serial numbers from LS1L-1001. Motor numbers ran from L350-1001.
- **Firedome serial numbers.** Cars built in Detroit had serial numbers that ran from LS2-1001 to 17409. No cars were built in Los Angeles. Motor numbers ran from L360-1001 and were interspersed with Fireflite engines.
- **Fireflite serial numbers.** Cars built in Detroit had serial ran from LS3-1001 to 13552. No cars were built in Los Angeles. Motor numbers ran from L360-1001 and were interspersed with Firedome engines.
- **Adventurer serial numbers.** All Adventurers were built at the Detroit factory. Adventurer Serial numbers ran from LS3-1001 to 13552 and were interspersed with Fireflite serial numbers. Motor numbers ran from L360-1001 and were interspersed with Firedome and Fireflite engines.

Serial number codes were on the left front door hinge pillar post. Firedome and Fireflite V-8 engine numbers were positioned at the top of the engine block under the water outlet elbow. No code numbers were provided for positive identification of body style type.

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BODY PAINT CODE/COLORS:

- A Black
- B Capri Blue
- B Lagoon Blue - Firesweep
- C Azure Blue
- C Seatone Blue - Firesweep
- D Mist Green - Firesweep
- D Seafoam Green
- E Leaf Green - Firesweep
- E Tamarack Green
- F Dawn Gray - Firesweep
- F Dove Gray
- G Charcoal Gray - Firesweep
- G Charcoal Gray
- G Slate Gray - Firesweep
- H Fiesta Red
- J Muscatel Maroon - Firesweep
- J Muscatel Maroon
- K Sunburst Yellow - Firesweep
- K Sunlit Yellow
- L Cloud White - Firesweep (LA)
- L Frosty White
- L White - Firesweep (Detroit)
- M Light Aqua - Firesweep
- N Dusty Orange - Firesweep
- N Gauguin Red
- P Adventurer Gold - Adventurer Only
- R Mandarin Rust
- S Samoa Green - Firesweep
- V Spanish Gold
- X Sahara Tan
- Z Spice Brown

DESOTO ENGINES:

- **Firesweep Base V-8:** DeSoto Firesweep V-8. Overhead valves. Cast iron block. Displacement: 350 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.06" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.0:1. Horsepower: 280 @ 4600 RPM. Torque: 380 @ 2400 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carburetor: Manual Trans - Ball & Ball two-barrel BBD 2772S; Auto Trans - Ball & Ball two-barrel BBD 2637S.
- **Firesweep Optional Power Pack V-8:** Overhead valves. Cast iron block. Displacement: 350 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.06" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.0:1. Horsepower: 295 @ 4600 RPM. Torque: 385 @ 2800 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carburetor: Manual Trans - Carter AFB four-barrel 2773S; Auto Trans - Carter AFB four-barrel 2642S. Dual exhausts as standard equipment.
- **Firedome Series V-8:** Overhead valves. Cast iron block. Displacement: 361 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.12" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.0:1. Horsepower: 295 @ 4600 RPM. Torque: 390 @ 2400 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carburetor: Manual Trans - Ball & Ball two-barrel BBD 2772S; Auto Trans - Ball & Ball two-barrel BBD 2637S.
- **Fireflite Series and Firedome Power Pack V-8:** Cast iron block. Displacement: 361 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.12" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.0:1. Horsepower: 305 @ 4600 RPM. Torque: 400 @ 3600 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carter Four-barrel AFB 2642S. Convertible equipped with Dual Exhausts - optional others except wagon.
- **Adventurer V-8:** Cast iron block. Displacement: 361 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.12" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.25:1. Horsepower: 345 @ 4600 RPM. Torque: 400 @ 3600 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Carburetors: two four-barrel Carter AFB - front number 2652S; rear number 2653S.
- **DeSoto Adventurer Optional Fuel Injected V-8:** Overhead valves. Cast iron block. Displacement: 361 CID. Bore and stroke: 4.12" x 3.38". Compression ratio: 10.25:1. Brake horsepower: 355 @ 5000 RPM. Torque: 400 @ 3600 RPM. Five main bearings. Hydraulic valve lifters. Induction: Bendix Electronic Fuel Injection.

These cars were originally built with dual-quad carburetors and were then converted to fuel-injection at the DeSoto factory. Most were later returned to the two 4-barrel configuration due to the fuel injector system's electronic malfunctions.

CHASSIS:

- **Wheelbase:** Firesweep 122". All others 126".
- **Overall length:** Firesweep station wagon 218.1". Firesweep passenger cars 216.5". Firedome, Fireflite and Adventurer 218.6". All other station wagons 220.2".
- **Front tread:** Firesweep 60.9". All others 61".
- **Rear tread:** All 59.7".
- **Tires:** Firesweep 8.00 x 14. Firedome, Fireflite 8.50 x 14. Adventurer 9.00 x 14.

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POWERTRAIN OPTIONS:

- Automatic transmission was considered standard DeSoto equipment, but extra cost on Firesweep and Firedome models. There was no charge for automatic transmission in Fireflite and Adventurer models.
- Powerflite two-speed automatic transmission was available only in Firesweeps at \$180 extra. Pushbutton gear shifting was standard
- Torqueflite three-speed automatic transmission was offered in all lines and was \$220 extra in Firesweep and Firedomes. Pushbutton gear shifting was standard.
- Three-speed manual transmission with column mounted controls was a "deduct option."

SIGNIFICANT OPTIONS:

- Air conditioning w/group order (\$404).
- Air Conditioning with Fresh Air heater (\$493).
- Air Foam seat cushions - optional Firesweep, standard on Firedome, Fireflite, Adventurer (\$11).
- Air rest on four-door and sport models (\$27).
- Antenna, dual rear (\$16).
- Backup lights - optional Firesweep, standard on Firedome, Fireflite, Adventurer (\$12).
- Bendix-built electronic fuel-injection) system, Adventurer only (\$637.20)
- Clock, self-winding, steering wheel clock (\$30).
- Dual exhausts, except on Adventurer, (\$34).
- Electric clock (\$18).
- Engine - four-barrel power-pack, Firesweep only (\$45).
- Front and rear carpets - optional Firesweep, standard on Firedome, Fireflite, Adventurer (\$14).
- Heater, Fresh Air (\$89).
- Heater, Instant Air (\$157).
- Non-Slip differential (\$50).
- Outside mirror (\$6).
- Padded safety panel (dash) - standard on Adventurer (\$21).
- Power antenna, single (\$24).
- Power brakes (\$39).
- Power seat, six-way (\$101).
- Power steering (\$106).
- Power window lifts (\$106).
- Radio, standard with antenna (\$120).
- Radio, Electro Tune with antenna (\$140).
- Rear seat speaker (\$15).
- Rear window defogger (\$21).
- Special paint finish, solid or two-tone (\$71).
- Tinted glass (\$32).
- Two-tone finish, standard type (\$19).
- Undercoating (\$14).
- Variable speed windshield wiper - standard on Firedome, Fireflite, Adventurer (\$7).
- Wheel covers (\$16).
- Whitewalls, standard on Adventurer (\$42-45).
- Windshield washer (\$12).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: The Adventurer series was announced at the 1958 Chicago Auto Show, held on January 4 of 1958. All other Desoto models were introduced November 1, 1957.

PRODUCTION: DeSoto production took a huge nosedive for 1958 - a year in which the U.S. was the middle of a big recession and all automakers were suffering. Only 49,445 units produced. See attached chart for production numbers.

1958 DeSoto Models								
Model Name	Series Number	Body Number	Wheelbase	Body Style Type & Seating	Factory Price	Shipping WeighHardt op	Body Totals	Model Totals
DeSoto Firesweep	LS1-L	None	122	2-dr Sportsman Hardtop-6P	\$ 2,890	3,660	5,635	19,414
	LS1-L	None	122	4-dr Sedan-6P	\$ 2,819	3,660	7,646	
	LS1-L	None	122	4-dr Sportsman Hardtop-6P	\$ 2,953	3,720	3,003	
	LS1-L	None	122	2-dr Convertible-6P	\$ 3,219	3,850	700	
	LS1-L	None	122	4-dr Station Wagon-6P	\$ 3,266	3,955	1,305	
	LS1-L	None	122	4-dr Station Wagon-9P	\$ 3,408	3,980	1,125	
							TOTAL	
DeSoto Firedome	LS2-M	None	126	4-dr Sedan-6P	\$ 3,085	3,855	9,505	17,479
	LS2-M	None	126	2-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,178	3,825	4,325	
	LS2-M	None	126	4-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,235	3,920	3,130	
	LS2-M	None	126	2-dr Convertible-6P	\$ 3,489	4,065	519	
							TOTAL	
DeSoto Fireflite	LS3-H	None	126	4-dr Sedan-6P	\$ 3,583	3,990	4,192	12,120
	LS3-H	None	126	2-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,675	3,920	3,284	
	LS3-H	None	126	4-dr Sportsman-6P	\$ 3,731	3,980	3,243	
	LS3-H	None	126	2-dr Convertible-6P	\$ 3,972	4,105	474	
	LS3-H	None	126	4-dr Station Wagon-6P	\$ 4,030	4,225	318	
	LS3-H	None	126	4-dr Station Wagon-9P	\$ 4,172	4,295	609	
							TOTAL	
DeSoto Adventurer	LS3-S	None	126	2-dr Hardtop-6P	\$ 4,071	4,000	350	432
	LS3-S	None	126	2-dr Convertible-6P	\$ 4,369	4,180	82	
							TOTAL	
							Production TOTAL	49,445

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CAR IMAGES



The 1958 DeSoto Adventurer Convertible was the most powerful & expensive in the line. Add \$637 for the Fuel Injection (shown here) to its \$4,369 base price & that's a lot of \$\$\$ for 355 HP! Only 82 converts were sold - one F.I. convertible remains.



The 1958 DeSoto Adventurer hardtop was the true performer, weighing 200 lbs. less than the convertible but packing the same 345 HP. 350 were sold. Shown here is the 355 HP Fuel Injection version.



Once again, the 1958 Fireflite Convertible was barely overshadowed by the Adventurer Convertible in price, but it was just as classy - and with 305 HP, it was no slouch. Only 474 were sold.

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CAR IMAGES Continued



The 1958 Desoto Firelite 4-door Sportsman was handsome and sold well, compared to other Firelites, with 3,243 delivered. This was down significantly from 6,728 in the previous year.



The 1958 Firelite Sportsman 2-door was sharp looking and had plenty of zip, but it was no Adventurer. The result of the Recession was only 3,284 were delivered.



The 1958 Firelite 4-door sedan sold the best of the Firelite line, which was not saying much with only 4,192 produced. In the previous year 11,565 were sold. This bread and butter Firelite's dismal deliveries stunned DeSoto management.

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CAR IMAGES Continued



The Fireflite wagons, Explorer (9 passenger) and Shopper (6 passenger), only accounted for 609 and 318 units respectively, in 1958. DeSoto wagons were never very strong sellers, but they were still off by 40% this year.



The 1958 Firedome convertible was sharp but was relegated to 2-bbl carburetion on the 361 CID V8. Whether it was the less powerful engine or the \$3,498 base price, or just the Recession, only 519 were produced.



The 1958 4-door Firedome Sportsman sold 3,130 units - a far cry from the previous year's 9,050.

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CAR IMAGES Continued



The 1958 Firedome 2-door Sportsman sold better than the 4-door, but could only muster 4,325 units, a bit less than half of the previous year's total.



The 1958 DeSoto Firedome 4-door sedan, usually a good seller, managed just 9,505 units – 41%. The 4-door versions had always sustained DeSoto, the drop in this model – across the board - was killing the brand.



The newly added 1958 DeSoto Firesweep convertible mustered only 700 units, though it was a great performer with the new 350 CID wedge power and could also be had with a Power Pack, raising HP to 295.

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CAR IMAGES Continued



The 1958 4-door Firesweep Sportsman was a very slow seller this year as compared to the previous, where 7,168 had been delivered. This year, only 3,003 were bought.



The 1958 Firesweep 2-door Sportsman was very handsome, perhaps that helped get it 5,635 in sales.



Ever practical and economically priced, the 1958 4-door DeSoto Firesweep ran second to the Firedome 4-door in sales volume with 7,646 delivered.

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CAR IMAGES Continued



FIRESWEEP 4 DOOR EXPLORER



FIRESWEEP 4 DOOR SHOPPER

In 1958, both the Fireflite and FireSweep lines had station wagons. The Firesweep versions sold the best with 1,305 Shopper 6-passenger versions and 1,125 Explorer 9-passenger versions delivered.

STYLING CHANGES FOR 1958



1958 DeSoto wagons and regular models changed little at the rear. As in 1957, the taillight bezels were squared off at the bottom on the standard cars and curved on the wagons. Both used the same bumpers as in 1957. The notable difference was the exhaust extensions which had the dimple at the top giving an appearance of four outlets. All else was unchanged.



The 1958 DeSoto Fireflite and Firedome (right) models had similar front facias, but the Firesweep (left) used the Dodge front with a DeSoto bumper/grille. Note the chrome surround on the Firesweep swept up over the headlights across the bottom of the hood and over the other headlight. The Fireflite/Firedome had individual cutouts for the headlights and no chrome lip on the hood. Note the difference is in the front fenders – Firesweep smooth sided, others with creases.

The new grille now filled a majority of the area and had a honeycomb grille insert, a dip in the center of the middle grille bar and round parking lights at the outboard ends. Fireflite/Firedome models used the bullet bumperettes now outward from the center.

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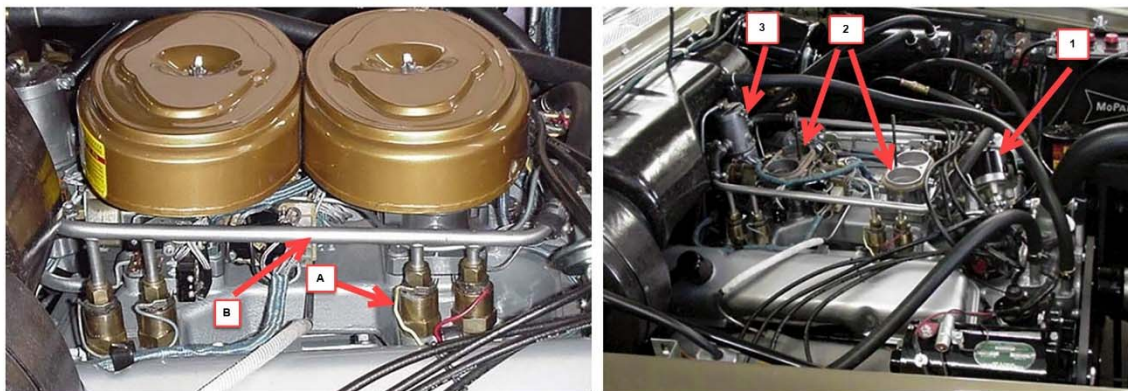
STYLING CHANGES FOR 1958



All 1958 DeSotos uses the same side trim and two-tone paint inserts on all hardtops and convertibles as standard. This insert was optional on all 4-doors. The chrome insert in the "C" pillar was standard on all hardtops. Significant differences were that the Fireflite had the special medallion on the front fender and the 'wind splits' on the top of the front fenders (optional on Firedomes). All had their model name in script at the rear. The Adventurer had a special panel insert with "Adventurer" in gold script.

Bendix Electrojector Fuel Injection

The Adventurer could be had with the special electronic fuel injection as a \$637 option. The system was strikingly familiar to the FI units released in the 1980s and in use in aftermarket kits today, with timed, variable flow rate injectors (A) fuel rails (B). There was a sensor that ran off the distributor that timed the injectors to the plug firing (1) two 2-barrel throttle bodies (2) and a pressure regulator with fuel return to the tank (3).



The system "brain box" was a computer using similar logic that was found in those 1980s FI computers, but it had two failings; the capacitors could not take the heat generated by an automobile, and it was unshielded from strong AM radio signals from radio station transmitters. When it did not suffer those two ills, it worked great - generating anywhere from 10 to 40 more HP than the two 4-barrel system.

The 1958 DeSoto Adventurer had 345 horsepower from its standard engine, and 355 advertised horsepower from its Electrojector version (considered to be closer to about 375).

Once again, the Adventurer ran a more potent camshaft, with a 260/260-degrees, 200 lb. open pressure valve springs, and of course, two 4-barrel carburetors or the Electrojector unit. Dual exhaust was standard.