

1957 CADILLAC SERIES 62 ELDORADO BIARRITZ



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CONTENTS

WHERE DOES THE '57 BIARRITZ FIT IN?	3
ABOUT THE EXAMPLE SHOWN HERE	3
WHAT SETS THIS CAR APART?	4
FACTS AND FIGURES	11
WANT PHOTOS?	12

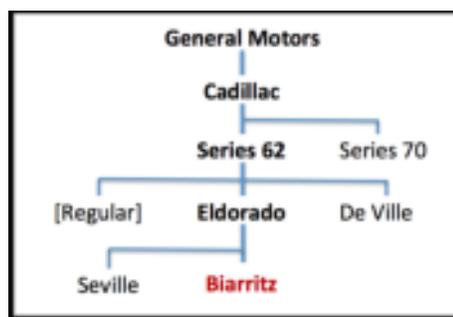
Designed by legendary car designer Harley Earl, the 1957 Series 62 Eldorado Biarritz was one of the most beautiful Cadillacs ever. Built during an era when Cadillac competed directly with Rolls Royce, the Eldorado Biarritz was named for both a fabled city of gold and a French coastal resort – both sure to conjure up images of wealth and success. Hey, Elvis owned one! Picture him, cruising around Memphis, left arm on the door and wrist atop the steering wheel.



And the bloom is not off this rose, because one of this model (with engine number 000001) sold at a 2013 California auction for \$649,000.

WHERE DOES THE '57 BIARRITZ FIT IN?

For 1957, the Biarritz was the convertible version of the Eldorado style Series 62. The hardtop version was the Seville.



ABOUT THE EXAMPLE SHOWN HERE

The car pictured in this article has an Alpine White exterior and a red leather interior. The convertible top is white. It was recently owned by collector Leonard Johnson (ljohnson@jk-cpas.com).

WHAT SETS THIS CAR APART?

The stunning beauty of the '57 Eldorado Biarritz springs from the legendary Harley Earl studio at GM. Here are some of the iconic design elements:



For 1957, Cadillacs were longer, lower, sleeker, and bolder. The '57 Biarritz epitomized that trend, looking as if it were going 100 miles per hour while firmly stuck to the road.



Eldorados sport dual circular headlights with chrome-lined eyebrows. Dual fins crown the front fenders, just aft of the headlights. The hood is lower than in previous years, devoid of top-side ornaments, and practically flush with the side fenders. Only a slight swale separates the hood and side fender.



Though the hood has no statuesque hood ornament, it still proclaims brand identity. On the front edge, the Cadillac crest is cradled in the wide V.



The front corners ably summarize the styling cues lavished on the Biarritz.

Low-profile chrome fins cap the fenders above a chrome-browed headlight. A rubber-tipped “Dagmar” projects from the inner end of the gull-wing section of the bumper. These conical forms are named for Dagmar, a rather buxom TV celebrity who appeared on the cover of the July 16, 1951 issue of *Life* magazine.

Incorporated into the lower chrome bumper are turn-signal and parking lights on the outside and fog lights inside. Between the headlight and the bumper is an ornamental grill that sweeps around the corner. A gold, rectangular-grid grill sweeps across the front. Around the corner, chromed aluminum forged Sabre-Spoke wheels complete the ensemble.



The name “Biarritz” appears in a sedate, gold script on the left and right front fenders, just behind the headlights.

The Biarritz emblems, the grill, and the ornaments on the hood and trunk are in gold.



The wrap-around windshield provides panoramic views to the front. It is supported by a forward-swept pillar.



Sleekness springs from continuity of line. It starts from the headlight brows and runs along the front fender, even with the hood, across the doorsill, then arches up slightly to meet the rear deck before skimming along the tops of the fins.



Back-swept shark fins sit inboard from the outside bulge of the rear fenders. These “stabilizer” fins are flat and horizontal along the top and pointed to the rear, while the back deck slopes downward. The overall effect is an illusion of blurring speed. Outlining these fins are simple chrome caps. The rear bumpers continue around the corner and match up with chrome molding over the wheel wells.



On the lower part of each rear fender is a stainless steel beauty panel that wraps around the rear corner and houses a round back-up light and exhaust port, each set into elegant rimmed receptacles. Topping this beauty panel is a broad, sculpted ridge that sweeps from the front of the rear wheel well, up and along the top of the wheel well, joining the top of the beauty panel, and following it all the way around to the rear.



At the base of the fins are single, round taillights topped with chrome eyebrows, reminiscent of the headlights. These lights are combination brake, turn-signal, and running lights.

At the corners, the fenders curve in all three directions, giving the rear end a distinctly rounded look. This was the first year Cadillac introduced the European-inspired rounded rear fenders, sometimes called “Chipmunk cheeks” because of the way they bulged.



On the rear deck, a simple gold-toned “Eldorado” bridges the arms of a similar gold-toned V ornament found on the hood. A bumper-like frame surrounds the recess for the license plate.

Piercing the separate left and right bumpers are backup lights inboard and exhaust ports outboard.



The interior maintains the meticulous attention to detail evident in the exterior. Balancing comfort and control, the interior offers ribbed leather bench seats and instruments that are clear and legible.



Cadillac worked hard to make the driver feel comfortable and in control. A matching-color steering wheel features a chrome inner horn ring. Gauges are limited to gas, speed, and water temperature, with warning lights for the parking brake and other issues. Easy-to-reach switches let the driver raise and lower windows, raise and lower the roof, open the trunk, and wash the windshield. Lighting includes an automatic map light, a lighted glove compartment, and even a lighted ashtray.

Cadillac's innovative automatic headlight dimmer, located at the left corner of the dash, relieves the driver of that wearisome chore.

Nor was the passenger ignored. The right visor includes a vanity mirror. And, in line with the custom of the times, a second cigarette lighter is within easy reach of the passenger.



A speaker for the radio is nestled between the dash and the transmission hump.



Instead of the usual circular clock, the Biarritz has a rectangular one, where the minutes slide by horizontally.



Seats consist of grained Cape-Buffalo leather benches and backs. Both the backs and benches are pleated (ribbed). For contrast, the backs are capped with unpleated bolsters, which could either be in the same color as the benches and backs (as here) or in white.

A fold-down armrest separates the seat backs, which bear a metal Cadillac emblem. An electric switch on the driver's side of the front seat shifts the seat up, down, fore, and aft as well as tilting it forward and back. Note: This photo, taken at an exhibition, shows the fiberglass parade boot installed.

1957 Series 62 Eldorado Biarritz



Back seat were not an afterthought, fit only for a couple of kids or the cocker spaniel. The Biarritz's back seat provides comfort for two full-sized adults.

A radio speaker-grill is incorporated at the top center of the back. On either side of the speaker, embedded in the bolster, are metal Cadillac medallions. Of course, there are a cigarette lighter and ashtray on each armrest

The folded convertible roof normally is covered by a fiberglass parade boot matching the body color.

The carpet, throughout the cabin, is a deep-pile blend of nylon.



The door panels exhibit the same intentional design as the rest of the interior. Grained Cape-Buffalo leather is pleated at the bottom (which is a map pocket with snap closures) and unpleated around the armrest cover and the main area of the door. Above this leather is a band of metal painted in a matching color, capped with an Elascofab shelf for durability.

From each end of the armrest project chrome spikes covering the considerable length of the door. The result looks like a martial-arts weapon in some fantasy video game.

At the bottom of the door is a chrome scuff-plate to protect the door from the kicking motion needed to open the door in a hurry.

Also on the door are a winder for the vent window and a remote control for the rear-view mirror.



Pop the hood and you are greeted with a glimpse of the 365 cubic inch (6 liter) Cadillac engine tucked neatly below the emblematic triangular gold air cleaner bearing the same wide V found on the hood and trunk lid.



Even the trunk is special. Despite the sloping lid, the trunk still encloses enough space for a vertically mounted spare.

An electric lock finishes latching the lid once it is lightly closed.

Whole effect of the styling is an undeniable feeling of forward motion, epitomizing the optimism of 1957.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Make and model	Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz
Sequence	Series 62 (5 th Generation, 1957-58)
Designer	Harley Earl
Body style	2-door convertible
Manufacturer	General Motors
ID number	57-6267X
Platform	GM C-body
Body	Fisher
Frame	Tubular-circular X-frame
Exterior color	This example: Alpine white. Other colors available: Black, Sabre Blue, Copper, and Elysian Green.
Top	White, cloth
Interior	This example: Kiowa Red leather. Other options (all in leather): Kiowa Red with white bolsters, black, black with white bolsters, Sabre Blue Metallic, Copper Metallic, and Elysian Green Metallic.
Length	222.1 in (5.641 m)
Width	80.0 in (2.032 m)
Height	57.9 in (1.47 m)
Wheelbase	129.5 in (3.289 m)
Track (front/rear)	61 in/61 in (1.549/1.549 m)
Drive	Rear
Acceleration	0-60 mph in 10.9 sec (0-100 km/h in 11.4 sec)
Top speed	120 mph (193 km/h)
Fuel type	Gasoline, premium

Fuel consumption	9.1 mpg (25.7 l/100 km)
Fuel capacity	20 gallons (76 liters)
Engine maker	Cadillac
Engine type	Overhead-valve V8 with dual 4-barrel carburetor
Engine size	365 cubic inches (6.0 L)
Engine power	300 horsepower
Transmission	Hydra-Matic 4-speed automatic
Rear axle ratio	3.07:1
Curb weight	5110 lbs., (2318 kg) [estimated]
Price new	\$7286 (2014 equivalent: \$63,748).
Number made	1800
Front suspension	Independent forked arms with coil springs, hydraulic shock absorbers, and torsion-bar stabilizer
Rear suspension	Semi-elliptic leaf springs with live rear axle
Brakes	4-wheel hydraulic drum brakes
Steering	Hydraulic power with 19.5:1 ratio
Wheels	Sabre-Spoke forged-aluminum
Tires	8.20 x 15, tubeless, 4-ply, wide whitewalls
Electrical system	12 volt, negative ground, generator
Gauges	Speedometer, fuel, water temperature
Amenities	Power brakes, power steering, air conditioning, power windows, power top, Autronic-Eye automatic headlight dimmer, clock, Six-Way Adjustable Seats, electric trunk latch, 3-way E-Z-Eye rear-view mirror, remote-control door mirror

WANT PHOTOS?

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