

Cortina Mk4/5 Buyers Guide

This is intended as a starting point of what to look out for when buying a Cortina. Take someone with you, it's always handy to have someone there to provide a unbiased opinion even if they are not mechanically minded.

I would recommend against buying a car without viewing it. It's amazing what pictures can hide.

Good bodywork is preferable to good mechanics. It can be very expensive to repair extensive rust especially if you're unable to weld.

Be aware that a tatty car with rust around the edges often hides other surprises when you start to look under the surface. An owner that has neglected small problems *may* have also skipped or bodged other problems rather than fixing them properly.

I hope that this is of some use to you, and good luck Cortina hunting.

- Bodywork
- Interior
- Engines
- Running Gear

Bodywork

Like most Ford's, rust is the biggest enemy to Cortina's. The lack of spray guards and adequate rust protection (even paint in some areas!) doesn't help matters. Cars which were Waxoiled or Zieberted from new tend to fair a lot better.

■ Front Valence

Not really a huge problem area. Stone chipping can cause this area to pepper. Rust often creeps between the front wing and valence seam

■ Front Jacking Points

Common area - most will have been welded here or need it unless you find an exceptional example.

■ Sills

Start corroding in the door shuts so lift the door seals. Also check the inner panel around the seat belt mountings.

■ Doors

These generally don't rust too badly. If the drain holes clog up bottoms will rot out.

Moisture can collect behind the side moldings and top trim sections (GL & up models).

■ Rear Jacking Point

Another common area for them to go. The floor raises at the final 8" of the sill around the rear jacking point. Will crumble if someone attempts to jack the car and the back of the sill disintegrates. Visible rust means there will probably be a good amount more unseen in the sill.

■ Rear Arches

Usual old Ford area, which is easily spotted from the outside or by running your hand behind the lip.

The seam between the arch and the body is susceptible to rust, which can be seen when the rear doors are opened.

■ Rear Lower Quarter

Mud collects behind the rear wheel and leads to bubbling.

■ Rear Valence

Rusts between the seams but is more likely to be a victim of parking dings.

■ Boot Floor

Very bad area especially around the filler neck. The chassis rails below are NOT painted so have no rust protection! Water also collects in spare wheel tub causing the boot floor to fall out.

■ Sunroof

More hassle than it's worth! The sunroof itself goes crusty around the edges between the seal. Water also gets trapped before getting down the drain holes as there is a lip of 0.5cm. The mechanism needs to be kept well oiled to stop seizing up.

The drainage channels that lead from the sunroof can cause problems if they become clogged up. They should exit to the road and not the chassis rails, which rot out as a consequence. Either that or they clog higher up and leak water down onto the floor.

■ Scuttle

Perished window rubbers cause the scuttle to rust and can lead to damp floors. This will be visible around the corner of the windscreen. Both front and rear screens suffer from this problem.

■ Front Wings

A lack of plastic guards mean mud and water collect in the top rear corners. This causes rotting on the top face and wing top rails.

■ Front Wings/Inner Fliitch

The wings bolt on and aren't the main problem. The panels behind are. Check the inner fliitch, especially the bonnet hinges as these are tricky to access.

■ Battery Tray

The seam between the tray and the inner wing rots out helping to corrode the inner wing.

■ Bulkhead

Rust occurs especially on the passenger side below the battery. Water combined with battery leaks mean the bulkhead to floor seams rot. Look out for wet carpets.

Interior

The interiors in general are pretty hardy. It's worth bearing in mind that no new replacement items are available and trim will get harder and more expensive to source over time.

■ Seats

Look out for the usual cigarette burns and rips. Driver's seat bottoms can collapse after high milages. The side bolsters wear due to the repeated action of getting in and out. But this is not nearly as bad as Capri's.

■ Door Cappings

Wooden door cappings on Ghia & Crusader models fade in the sun. The vineer isn't very thick, so they are easily damaged by water.

■ Speaker Holes

Only Ghia models were fitted with speakers in the front doors. Many will have been cut which is not a problem unless it's been done badly or they've been removed. Either way you'll need new door cards.

Rear parcel shelves are also a popular place to mount speakers.

■ Botched Wiring

If an aftermarket stereo has been fitted, check the wiring is properly connected, insulated and fused. The last thing you want is it causing a fire.

Engines

The Mk4/5 Cortina was equipped with either the 1.3 Kent, 1.6/2.0 Pinto or 2.3 Cologne engines. All are fairly tough provided they are looked after and receive regular oil and filter changes. Take the dipstick out and see what colour the oil is. Jet black indicates that it hasn't been changed for some time.

■ 1.3 Kent

Fitted to base models the tappets get noisy with age and timing chains rattle. Look for oil fumes when revved coming from the filler cap suggesting worn piston rings.

■ 2.3 Cologne

Fitted to higher spec Cortina models. Noisy tappets are very common. Fibre timing gears are a weak point and the teeth can snap, however stronger steel replacements are available.

■ 1.6/2.0 Pinto

This is the most common engine you will come across in the Cortina range. The oil spray bar can become clogged if the oil has not been changed regularly (every 5000 miles). This leads to oil starvation to the camshaft which wears rapidly as a result. Re-designed spray bars with bigger holes cost about £6 and help stop clogging.

the cambelt needs to be changed every 30,000 miles. If the timing belt cover has been removed the belt can get wet and snap as well as rubbing on any surrounding pipework.

Ford VV carburettor's are often replaced by 32/36 DGAV Weber's (found on 2.0's) as the VV spindles wear and the diaphragm is prone to splitting.

Running Gear

The Mk4/5 Cortina inherited its running gear from the Mk3. This has been the basis for many kit cars over the years so are solid and dependable. Parts are cheap and are easy to replace.

■ Gearbox

The 4 speed boxes are tough and shouldn't give a problem and regular oil changes help. Sierra 5 speed boxes are often retro fitted to help with cruising but it's design can leave 5th gear being starved of oil so make sure it's properly topped up.

■ Suspension

Worn void bushes on the rear trailing arms can fail causing sloppy handling and the back to wobble all over the place. Even new, the rubber bushes could wear in a matter of months, so replace with poly ones.

Front ball joints and track rod ends can wear causing heavy steering but replacements are cheap.

Look out for DIY lowering springs which have been cut. If your going down this route buy proper shortened springs for around £25 each.

■ Differential

Not a problem, but the casing panel can rust leading to leaks leaving the diff running dry.

■ Electrics

Any electrical problems are usually due to a bad earth or connection. The headlight fuse can overheat and melt the fuse box causing the lights to stop working.