USA 1936-1942

ALL TIME GREATS
GROUP 5
NUMBER 48

Lincoln ZEPHYR

Introduced as a 'junior' Lincoln, the Zephyr was the car that saved the division during the late 1930s. It revitalized the range and brought a combination of style and V12 power at a price rivals could not match.

Produced by Ford Motor Co., Dearborn, Michigan

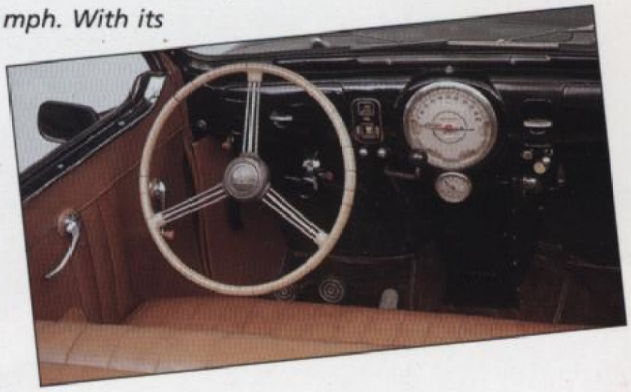
VITAL STATISTICS

Top speed:	87 mph
0-60 mph:	16.0 sec.
Engine type:	V12
Displacement:	267 c.i.
Max power:	110 bhp at 3,900 rpm
Max torque:	180 lb-ft at 3,500 rpm
Weight:	3,790 lbs.
Gas mileage:	16 mpg
Price:	$1,839

BEHIND THE WHEEL

"...relaxed performance."

"Effortless, relaxed performance sums up the Zephyr. The V12 is silky-smooth and pulls from extremely low revs yet still has enough top-end power to move the car to a relaxed 87 mph. With its synchromesh gears and a light clutch, gear shifts are easy. The steering is light thanks to the low-geared ratio, with 4.5 turns lock to lock. Despite having a fairly dated suspension, the ride is smooth, making long-distance journeys an enjoyable experience."



A distinctive feature of the Zephyr is its large-faced, center-mounted speedometer.

Lincoln ZEPHYR

The Zephyr was a curious mixture of new technology—with unitary construction and smooth styling—combined with the old, including mechanical drum brakes and beam axle suspension front and rear.

V12 engine

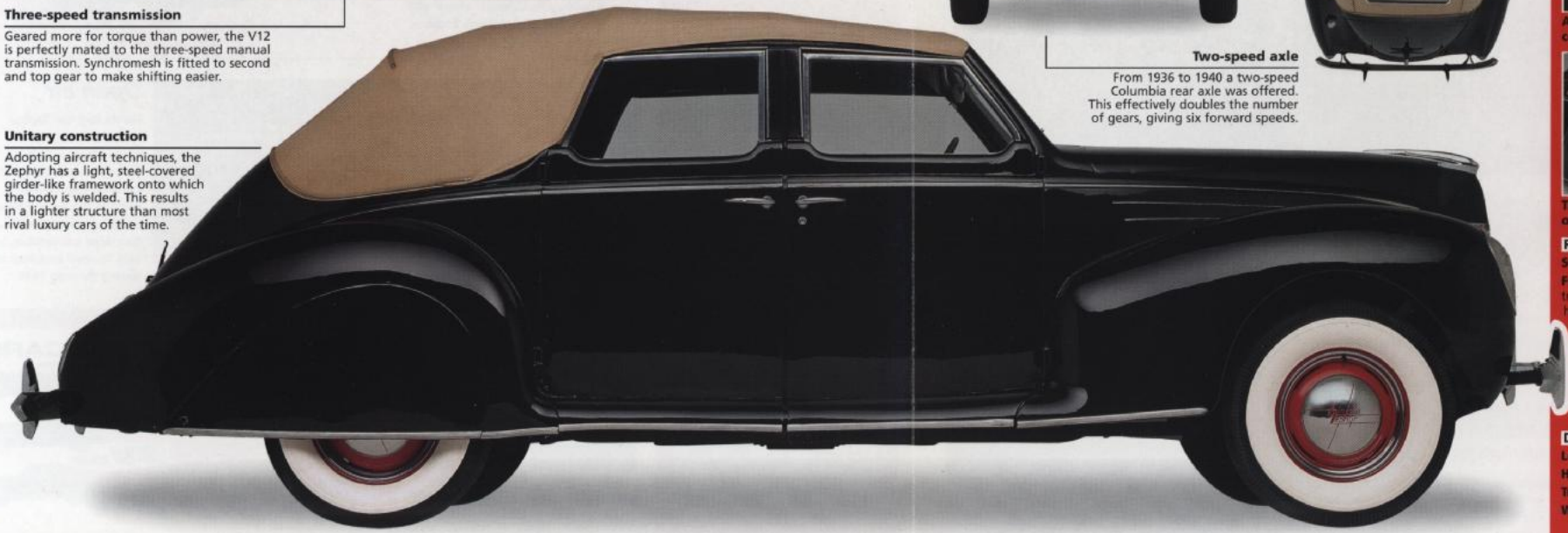
The Zephyr V12 is a compromise as it is based on the flathead V8. Quiet and refined, it is tuned for torque, not horsepower. The biggest problem is reliability and, consequently, many owners chose to replace the V12 with later Mercury flathead V8s.

Three-speed transmission

Geared more for torque than power, the V12 is perfectly mated to the three-speed manual transmission. Synchromesh is fitted to second and top gear to make shifting easier.

Unitary construction

Adopting aircraft techniques, the Zephyr has a light, steel-covered girder-like framework onto which the body is welded. This results in a lighter structure than most rival luxury cars of the time.



Vacuum wipers

There is no electric motor for the windshield wipers, so they are powered by the inlet manifold vacuum. The speed of the wipers varies with engine load, resulting in a slower wiper speed up hills.

Steel disc wheels

By 1936, most American automobile manufacturers had abandoned wire wheels in favor of discs, and the Zephyr was no exception.

Beam axles

Due to the stubbornness of Henry Ford, the Zephyr retained beam-axle suspension with transverse leaf springs. To improve the handling, adjustable hydraulic shocks were offered.

Two-speed axle

From 1936 to 1940 a two-speed Columbia rear axle was offered. This effectively doubles the number of gears, giving six forward speeds.

Specifications

1939 Lincoln Zephyr

ENGINE

Type: V12

Construction: Cast-iron block and alloy heads

Valve gear: Two sidevalves per cylinder operated by a side-mounted camshaft

Bore and stroke: 2.75 in. x 3.75 in.

Displacement: 267 c.i.

Compression ratio: 7.2:1

Induction system: Single two-barrel downdraft carburetor

Maximum power: 110 bhp at 3,900 rpm

Maximum torque: 180 lb-ft at 3,500 rpm

TRANSMISSION

Three-speed manual

BODY/CHASSIS

Unitary steel construction with four-door convertible sedan body.

SPECIAL FEATURES

A special V12 engine was commissioned for the Zephyr.

The spare tire mount can be hinged outward for easier luggage access.

RUNNING GEAR

Steering: Worm-and-roller

Front suspension: Beam axle with transverse semi-elliptic leaf spring and hydraulic shock absorbers

Rear suspension: Live axle with transverse semi-elliptic leaf spring and hydraulic shock absorbers

Brakes: Drums (front and rear)

Wheels: Steel discs, 16-in. dia.

Tires: 7.00 x 16 in.

DIMENSIONS

Length: 210.0 in. **Width:** 73.0 in.

Height: 67.0 in. **Wheelbase:** 122.0 in.

Track: 55.5 in. (front), 58.25 in. (rear)

Weight: 3,790 lbs.

Milestones

1934 Briggs exhibits a concept car designed by John Tjaarda at the Chicago World's Fair. It has a rear-mounted V8 engine, fully independent suspension, unitary construction and radically new streamlined body styling.

The Zephyr was initially offered in two- and four-door sedan forms.

1936 A production Zephyr goes on sale. It is powered by a 267-cubic inch V12 and is styled is by Bob Gregorie.

1938 Zephyrs get a longer wheelbase and styling changes including a mouth organ grill.

A restyle for 1938 set a styling trend for the rest of the decade.

1940 The Zephyr gains an all-new body and a V12 stroked to 292 cubic inches. The convertible sedan is dropped, but production reaches 21,944.

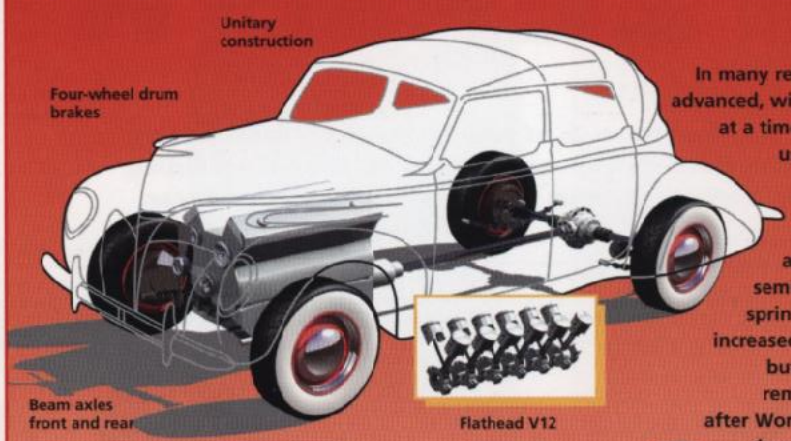
1942 Civilian auto production is suspended.

Value Guide

ORIGINAL PRICE	
1939	$1,839
CURRENT VALUE	
	$30,000-$70,000

The Zephyr introduced bargain-basement V12 motoring.

UNDER THE SKIN



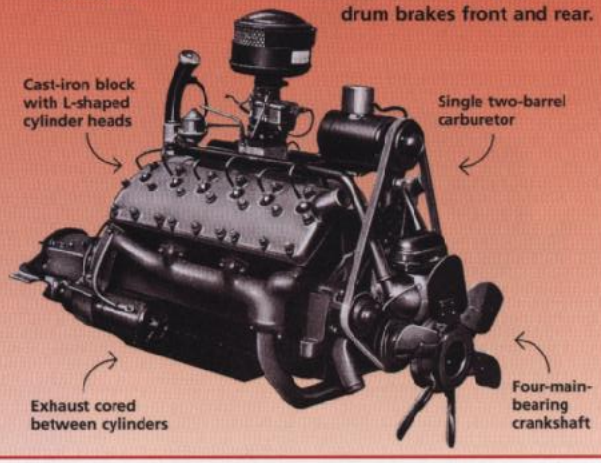
Semi new

In many respects, the Zephyr was advanced, with unitary construction at a time when rivals were still using a separate chassis. The suspension, by contrast, was old-fashioned, with beam axles front and rear and semi-elliptic transverse leaf springs. The wheelbase was increased to 125 inches in 1938, but the suspension set up remained unchanged until after World War II. Zephyrs have drum brakes front and rear.

THE POWER PACK

L-head V12

Although originally intended to be powered by a V8, the Zephyr was actually fitted with a V12 on the orders of Edsel Ford. It is a four-main-bearing L-head unit based on the flathead V8, but with a 75-degree angle. Initially, it produced only 110 bhp, and early versions suffered from overheating, warped bores and oil sludge buildup due to inadequate crankcase ventilation. The addition of hydraulic lifters in 1938 and cast-iron heads in 1941 improved reliability.



Convertible Zephyr sedans were offered only in 1938 and 1939.

Open air

For its day, the Zephyr was revolutionary in many ways, with its unitary construction and trend-setting styling. Perhaps the most desirable of all body styles is the four-door convertible, built only in small numbers and lasting through 1939.

NOSE TO NOSE

Cord 810 • Chrysler Airflow Sedan • Lincoln Zephyr

TOP SPEED	0-60 mph	POWER	WEIGHT	RIVAL CARS
90 mph	20.0 sec.	125 bhp	3,650 lbs.	CORD 810
88 mph	19.5 sec.	125 bhp	4,166 lbs.	CHRYSLER AIRFLOW SEDAN
87 mph	16.0 sec.	110 bhp	3,790 lbs.	LINCOLN ZEPHYR