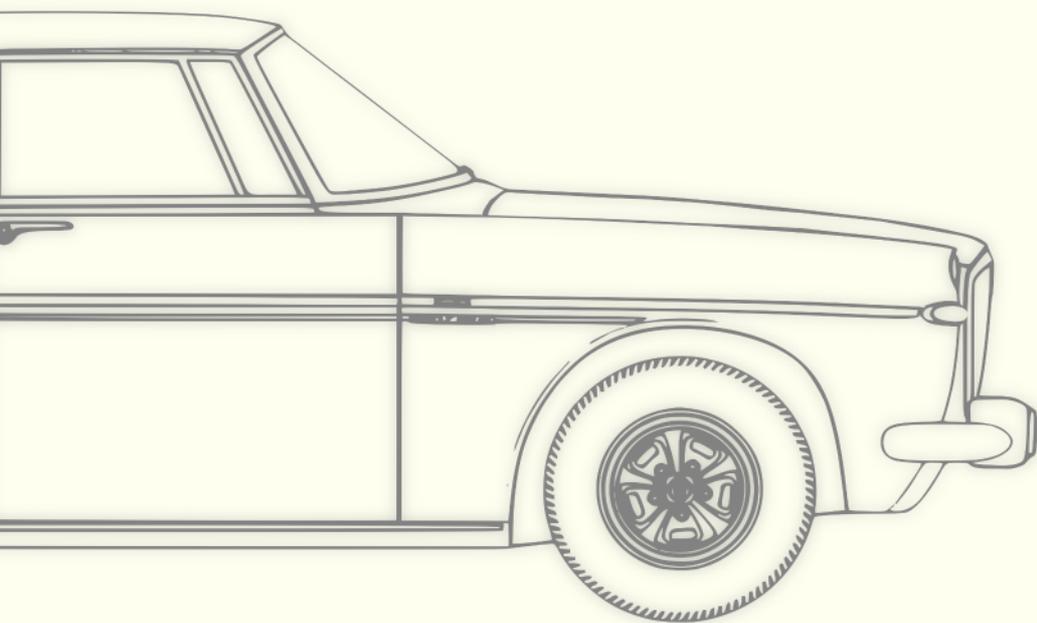




***Rover P5 (3 Litre) and P5B (3.5 Litre)
Buyers Guide***



Rover P5 and P5B Buyers Guide"

The Rover P5 (3 Litre) and P5B (3.5 Litre) are classic cars in every sense. They were successful, reliable, well-built cars that were well-regarded when new. They arguably represent the pinnacle of British car manufacturing (before the problems of the 1970's beset the industry), embodying most features that make a British car 'British': a lovely interior in wood, leather and with thick carpet, and external styling that is solid with just a hint of raffishness (especially the P5B Coupe with its chrome wheels, front fog lights, lowered roofline and V8 engine). Thoroughly engineered, beautifully styled, stylishly appointed and good-to-drive, they can be very rewarding cars to own.

If you're reading this with a view to buying one of these cars, hopefully this site will be useful to you both now and when you've bought your car. Take a look at the [Information](#) page to understand more about the different models you could choose, and the [Development Story](#) to understand how the P5 and P5B were developed and how they changed over time. Also [take a look at our series 'The Rover P5B Coupe In The Nude'](#) where we follow the dismantling of a car by an enthusiast (Cyrille) - this provides a very useful insight into how these cars are constructed.

Of course you should also [subscribe to this site for regular news and updates](#) to avoid missing any new features. Also see below for other buyers guides, join the [Rover P5 Owners Club](#), read or ask questions on the [Rover P5 Club Forum](#), and [attend a Rover P5 and P5B event](#) to speak with experienced owners. Being enthusiasts, people are generally keen to pass-on useful knowledge and help newcomers.

I recommend buying [Rover P5 and P5B The Complete Story, by James Taylor](#) for anyone interested in these cars (whether owners or not), as the book is the best source of detail on models and how the cars evolved. Once you have your car, getting a copy of the [Rover 3 & 3.5 Litre Workshop Manual Saloon & Coupe](#) is an absolute necessity. [See our reviews of these and other books here.](#)

The Rover P5 and Rover P5B are generally better-made than most cars of the 1950's and 1960's. However, even the youngest P5B is now 44 years old at the time of writing, and they have not yet reached the level where the best restorations make hard financial sense, so it pays to take your time choosing the right car. No matter how good a car you think you've found, there will always be another available that may be better, so never rush into a purchase. And NEVER buy the first car you see!

Rover P5 and P5B Buyers Guide - Parts Availability"

Parts availability is quite good. There is one main supplier of parts, [J.R. Wadhams](#), who are located in the UK and stock most things needed to keep these cars on the road. [Ebay has a surprising number of parts as well](#), and quite a few '[New Old Stock](#)' or [NOS parts are listed there](#) - these can be expensive but can be worth buying, although remember that they may be 40+ years old, so items such as rubber seals may have degraded with age.

[David Green](#) is a really useful source of used parts - he breaks cars that are too-far gone to restore.

The P5 and P5B electrical system uses fairly standard [Lucas](#) parts that many British cars of the period used, so new and used parts are quite easily found.

Rover P5 and P5B Buyers Guide - The Search"

Check the price guides in classic car magazines to see what you can realistically afford. At the time of writing (mid 2018) you can get a roadworthy P5 or P5B for around £5,000, but they will likely need significant expenditure in the near future. £5-10,000 gets a car that is better and should be usable for some time to come, then £10,000+ buys some of the better cars. Some cars have sold for between £20-30,000, but they are normally very low mileage in original or show condition.

Coupe's tend to be slightly more expensive than saloons, and the 3.5-Litre V8 is generally more expensive than the 3-Litre straight-six.

Read as much as you can about the Rover P5 and P5B, so you understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Original vs. Modified"

This can be a contentious issue for any classic car, and obviously people are free to do whatever they want with their cars. However, originality can be very desirable (and more valuable) than an extensively modified car, and personally I prefer any modifications to be reversible. But very few P5 or P5B will have survived 40-50 years in showroom specification.

My personal view is that originality is generally best, for the following reasons:

1. One of the pleasures of owning a classic car is to experience something different from a modern car, including the bad points. To modernise a classic is to diminish it's character.
2. Many improvements might be a problem to maintain in the future. If you think finding a good rear bumper for a P5 is tricky now, how about sourcing a part for that electronic ignition system fitted back in 1987?
3. The P5 and P5B are relatively rare cars, and were very well-built when new, so it seems a shame to mess around with such a rare beast by applying modern changes.

Ultimately it's up to you, but do consider what you want - returning a modified car to original might be very expensive in the future.

Where to Look"

Bear in mind that these cars weren't common when new, so sometimes you need to take your time and wait for the right car to be advertised.

It may be worth putting a 'wanted' post on the [Rover P5 Club Forum](#). One of the best websites I've found for classic car sales in the UK is [Car and Classic](#), which normally has a good selection of cars listed. I bought my car through this website. Of course there's also [eBay](#) - it generally has several Rover P5 and P5B's listed, mainly in the UK.

Be aware that scammers advertise everywhere. There is a great deal of advice available on the internet that I recommend you read about buying any classic car.

1. Any deal that sounds too good to be true probably is.
2. Be wary of anything that sounds odd: selling cars on behalf of other people, correspondence via email only, evasiveness on details, unwillingness to meet at a home address, excuses as to why a viewing is difficult, wanting money up-front etc.

When you find a car that's interesting, study the photos and read the text carefully. Photos can hide a great many things, so unless you're willing to take a massive gamble, a viewing and test drive is always recommended.

Rover P5 and P5B Buyers Guide - First Contact

Once you've found a car you're interested in, it's time to contact the seller. The best way is a phone call, as you can start to get a 'feel' for the seller. If the seller claims to be a private seller it can be useful to start the conversation by saying "I'm calling about the car that's advertised" - if the seller is a dealer they will have to ask about which car you mean. Not that there's anything wrong with dealers, but if the seller isn't honest about this, they may be dishonest about other things.

Have a list of questions to ask - any honest seller should be happy to answer your questions. If the car is some distance away, put more effort into this stage to minimise wasted time and money in travelling. Things to ask can include:

- Anything that isn't clear from the advert.
- Ask about the cars history, how long the seller has owned it, why they're selling it.
- Ask about how much the car has been used (this can be verified from the MOT history).
- Ask what the main problems are with the car - sometimes a direct question like this can produce some really useful information.
- If you want to proceed, ask to arrange a viewing and test drive. A test drive can be incredibly useful; a passenger ride is less than ideal but without insurance it might be your only option and is better than nothing.

Rover P5 and P5B Buyers Guide - The Viewing

When buying a classic car, knowledge is power. Everything you've learned from the previous paragraphs will help you assess a cars desirability and suitability. It can be useful to be accompanied by an impartial and genuinely knowledgeable friend or acquaintance, if only to get a second opinion and avoid the rush of blood to the head you get when finally seeing and (maybe) driving your (possibly) ideal car. Modern used-car inspection services are not helpful when buying a classic, and classic inspection services can be very useful but sometimes expensive.

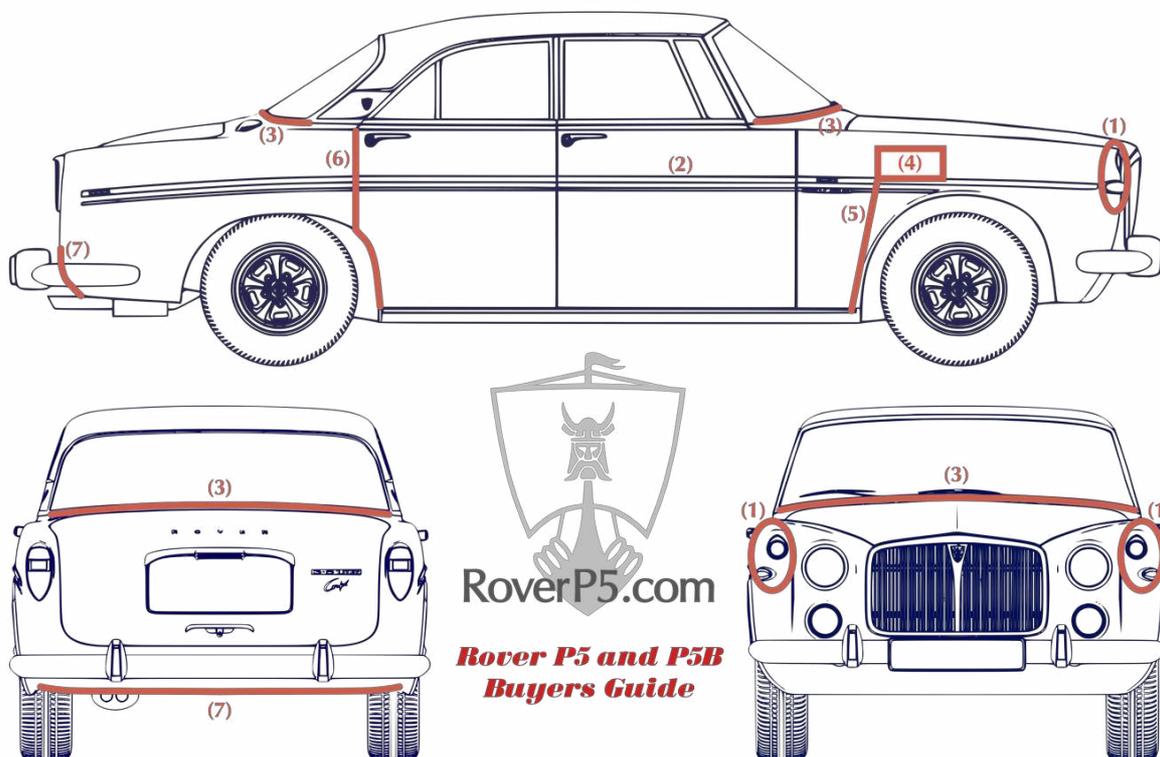
I once read a book (can't recall what it was called) that advised you could get a 'feel' for a car within 10 seconds of seeing it, which I think is very true. Does the car look cared for and is it sitting straight on the road? Are the panels fairly straight, the panel gaps even (ish), the bumpers level, the

car sitting square on the road? Is the owner evasive or happy to leave you to look around and under the car?

Important Things to Check

Rover P5's and P5B's are good at hiding rust. Outer panels can appear acceptable even when the inner-structure is rotten. But they are also better at resisting rust than many cars of the period, and with a few pointers even a non-technical person can make an assessment of a P5 or P5B.

At a basic level, the most costly things to fix are the interior and the cars bodywork. Engines are relatively simple and parts are available, especially the P5B V8, and other mechanical items are fairly readily available.



Bodywork

As mentioned above, due in part to the cars construction, Rover P5 and P5B's can hide corrosion very well, so don't just rely on the outward appearance. Starting at the front of the car, check the following things first:

- Are the panels generally straight and dent-free?

- Are the panel gaps generally even. Bonnets quite often have a large gap along the sides that isn't always even along its length, as bonnets can deform slightly and replacement wings may not be a perfect fit, but door and boot gaps should be even.
- Check around the front sidelights and indicators (1) - mud can accumulate inside the top of the wings at the front, and corrosion can start. Wings are bolted-on, but good replacements may not be cheap.
- Are the side trim-strips (2) aligned between panels along each side? Poorly restored cars may have mis-aligned trim strips. The trim should drop towards the rear of the car, but it should be aligned from one panel to the next.
- Are the window rubbers cracked and hard? Cracks in the windscreen and rear screen rubbers can allow water to sit in the window surround and rot the bodywork framing the window, particularly around the bottom corners. Also check the scuttle area (3) under the windscreen and rear screen - any bubbling here is a sign the car has severe corrosion. Whilst new windscreen and rear screen seals aren't expensive, fitting them is uniquely difficult and can take the best part of a day of cursing, even for a professional who hasn't done a P5 or P5B before.
- Open the doors, and try to lift their rear edge. Are the door hinges worn? If so, it will be difficult to align or close the doors. Even worse, if the hinge pillar moves, then serious rot has affected things. Are the door seals in OK condition? New door seals are available and aren't too difficult to fit, but they take time to do properly.
- Are the bumpers level and dent-free, and is the rear bumper corroded inside (behind the rear wheels)? These are expensive to repair or replace.
- Are the wheels and tyres in good condition? A P5B should have chromed Rostyle wheels with black sprayed sections. These wheels are expensive to have re-chromed.

Now check the following areas of the body in more detail:

- Inner front wings, especially looking inside the front wheel arch at the top rear (4), where a box-section can collect water and rot. Whilst you're there, check the splash-panels (5) at the rear of the front wheelarch at their top and bottom edges.
 - The A-post at the bottom, where it meets the sill. This is quite a complex area to repair.
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- The sills (cills?) of the car. Not just the exterior which are structural, but get under and look at the bottom and inside of the sill before it meets the floorpan. Replacement sills are available but need fitting properly to ensure the car doesn't distort. The sills on a P5B were painted black, which continued along the front wings. A restored or resprayed car may not have this detail.
- The jacking-points. There should be 4, at the front and rear of each sill. They are round tubes into which the standard jack fits, and when not being used these should have rubber 'bungs' inserted. **DO NOT TRUST THE STANDARD JACK AND JACKING POINTS UNTIL THE CAR HAS BEEN INSPECTED BY A PROFESSIONAL!**
- The bottoms of the doors. Repair panels are available for the lower part of the door skins. Doors should generally shut with a 'thunk' and not need to be slammed shut.
- The C-post, where the rear doors latch (6), which you can see when the rear doors are opened. This is a notorious area for corrosion, and it can continue down to the sill and up behind the front edge of the rear wings.
- Inner rear wings, and whilst there check the battery tray in the boot for corrosion.
- Rear chassis legs (yes, although it's a monocoque body, it still has short rear chassis legs as part of the body), especially around the rear spring mounts.
- The rear valence, under the rear bumper (7). This is double-skinned so can collect water and corrode, and isn't the cheapest repair.
- Exterior trim condition: bumpers are chromed to a high standard, but the rear bumper can corrode at the rear corners. Other trim is stainless steel or aluminium, so is unlikely to corrode but may be dented - new replacements aren't available, so good used parts will be the only option if they need replacing.

Interior Trim

All P5's and P5B's came with leather seats, whilst door panels and headlining are vinyl. New carpet sets are available and those from J R Wadhams are very high-quality, but most other items will need repair or replacement by a skilled car upholsterer.

If your car has a musty smell, it may be that water has got inside. Carpets and sound-deadening material can hold water and this can start to smell quite quickly. Many people confuse this as the smell of class (wood and leather), but often it's the smell of mildew!

Trim designs and colours changed through the life of these cars, so the only way to be sure the interior is 'correct' is to check it against reference sources.

- **Seats.** The leather can dry-out, and once too-far-gone it is basically impossible to 'restore', no matter what you may be told - I've seen leather turn into something more like cardboard. Seams may split, especially the front seats. P5B front seats are notorious for using a type of 'chipped foam' that degrades over time - look for foam dust under the front seats. The only solution is to strip the seats and replace the foam.
- **Carpets.** As mentioned above, replacement carpet sets are available and can be very high-quality.
- **Wood.** The interior features a lot of wood - the dashboard door tops and (on saloons) window surrounds. This is generally veneered - very thin sheets of high-quality wood bonded to a plywood or chipwood base, then finished with multiple coats of a shellac varnish to a high-shine. Water and damp can lift the veneer off the base, discolour the veneer, and the shellac varnish can lift away from the veneer. A proficient woodworker can repair this, but it can take time to do properly and it's very difficult to replicate the factory finish.
- **Other trim.** Generally interior trim isn't available new, so any damaged or missing trim will require the sourcing of good used items. The window-winder mechanism on Coupe's is not very robust and can wear, leading to difficulty opening or closing windows. Replacements aren't available new, but the winding mechanism can be repaired.

Mechanicals

The 3 litre straight-six and 3.5 litre V8 engines are generally robust and can run for well over 100,000 miles. As with many engines of this period, engine oil should be replaced every 3,000 miles or annually, whichever occurs first.

- The 3 litre engine should be very smooth - any sign or roughness should be investigated further. However, as with many older engine designs, even an engine in good condition can use a lot of oil, and oil pressure at tickover can be quite low - this isn't necessarily a problem if everything else seems good, and as long as the oil pressure rises with engine speed.

- It is important, especially with the allow V8, that coolant contains sufficient anti-freeze and corrosion inhibitor, otherwise the waterways of the engine can corrode.
- Later V8 engines (1969 onwards) had an automatic choke called an Automatic Enrichment Device (AED) that proved unreliable in use. The AED is quite rare now, as many cars were converted back to manual choke (and Rover actually sold a kit to do this conversion as they realised the AED could not be made to work reliably). One way to check an AED is to start the engine from cold, let it warm up partially for 2-3 minutes, then switch the engine off and leave it a minute. Then try re-starting the engine - if it is difficult, the AED is not working correctly.
- Also on the V8 engine the hydraulic tappets can be a little noisy on first start, but should quickly quieten-down as oil pressure normalises. As with the 3 litre engine, the V8 can have low oil pressure at ticker speeds, which again isn't a problem as long as the pressure rises with engine speed.
- The V8 was designed to run on '5 star' fuel (100 octane), which has long-since disappeared. Retarding the ignition from factory-spec is the answer - some experimentation may be needed to get this right, as age and period factory tolerances mean that different engines respond differently to ignition retarding. It's probably worth using 'Super Unleaded' fuel in a V8 rather than regular unleaded.
- Gearboxes, whether manual or automatic, should be smooth. Check the kick-down on the automatic to make sure it works, and also listen to a 'bonk' noise from the rear differential when coming to a stop - this is common and not necessarily a problem, but it can also be caused by a badly adjusted kick-down cable. Automatic gearbox oil should be red-coloured - if it is brown, or smells burned, then that means the gearbox may well need a rebuild soon.
- Some P5's and all P5B's have power steering as standard. The steering is generally very light on these cars, which is normal. However, the power steering box is notorious for leaking, and rebuilds are not simple to do correctly. Reconditioned power steering boxes are available from specialists.
- The suspension is generally soft and smooths most bumps very well, much better than most modern cars, although sharp ridges can be felt through the car. Suspension bushes, if required, are available from specialists, but there are quite a number of them, so a full rebuild can be expensive and time-consuming.

- Brakes are generally trouble-free. All cars have a single-circuit system, with all but the earliest cars having front disc brakes. The handbrake is activated by a short cable and series of rods that run under the car - this requires careful setup, but the handbrake should work well if correctly adjusted. Most parts are available from specialists.

Electrics

As previously mentioned, most electrical parts are available or serviceable, and Rover generally used standard components from suppliers such as Lucas. For their age, the electrical systems are fairly complex and became more complex as time progressed and additional features were added. The wiring diagram in the workshop manual is small and not colour coded, but Rover P5 Club members can get a larger colour diagram from the club.

- Earlier cars were positive earth, but later cars changes to negative earth. Later cars also used an alternator rather than dynamo.
- As with many British cars of the period, the wiring loom is a mixture of bullet connectors and spade terminals. Also some cables are cloth-covered, whereas later cars also started to use plastic-covered cables. A mixture on later cars is quite normal.
- The battery is in the boot, with a thick cable running to the starter motor at the front. This generally doesn't present any problems as long as terminals are clean and corrosion-free.

Rover P5 and P5B Buyers Guide - Other Considerations

So, those are the practical things to look out for when buying a Rover P5 or P5B. If you're new to classic cars, there are a few other things to consider before you jump-in to classic ownership. Some of these might be obvious, but I thought it worth including them anyway - better to think about these now to avoid disaster later!

A New Hobby?

Buying a classic car is rather more like starting a new hobby than buying a new car. To get the most out of classic car ownership you really need to make some commitment to learning about the cars (not necessarily how to fix them, but that helps) and expending some effort into looking after them (at the very least cleaning and polishing and basic maintenance). No classic is 'easy' to look after - you can't just drop them off at the nearest dealer and expect everything to go well - few modern garages have the skills needed to look after a classic, and some parts can be tricky to source.

Investment?

Perhaps you're buying as an investment? It's true that some classics have proved to be excellent investments; if you had bought an Aston Martin DB5 25 years ago you'd have seen its value increase more than tenfold. As with property, shares or gold, the best time to buy is when a classic model is undervalued, and that demands extensive knowledge, foresight and luck. Many models languish in the cheap-and-cheerful market for many years, and some never become particularly valuable. There's little logic to this - Rover P5 and P5B's are almost universally respected and loved and are quite rare, yet they've only recently modestly risen in value (although this may also be an ideal to buy one?). Fashion, image, emotion and nostalgia play as much a part in a classic car value than any sort of market logic.

In any case, buying a classic car purely for speculative reasons is like buying a beautiful painting and keeping it in a safe. Cars are designed to be driven, and deteriorate quickly if they're locked away unused. And anyway, driving a classic is one of the main pleasures of ownership.



The Environment?

Surely classic cars pollute more than a modern car? Well, yes and no. They certainly use more fuel than most modern cars, but a significant portion of a car's energy consumption over its lifetime is expended in making the car in the first place (30-50%). Driving a classic means you avoid this significant energy use, and it is the ultimate 'make do and mend' solution.

There will be more pollutants emitted from the exhaust than a modern car, as Rover P5 and P5B's don't benefit from electronic engine management and catalytic converters, but then most classic cars are well maintained and this can at least be minimised. To see the amount of particulates some modern diesels emit makes it clear that modern isn't necessarily better for the environment.

Servicing and Maintenance

Older cars generally need more frequent servicing than modern cars, so that even a 1960's classic will need servicing every few thousand miles. If that matches your annual mileage it shouldn't be too onerous, but bear in mind that a V8 engine will be more expensive to service than a four-cylinder.

How handy are you with a set of spanners? If the answer is not at all, a basic car maintenance course is recommended; taking your car to a specialist for an annual service and MoT is one thing, paying someone £80 per hour to change a bulb is quite another.

Access to a dry, secure and reasonably accessible garage is also almost essential, and not merely as a space in which to tinker and to store an accumulation of spare parts; on-street parking can be tough on classic cars. If you don't have a garage at home (I don't), the cheapest option is to rent a council-owned lock-up. It probably won't have power, however, so cold and dark winter days can be character building!

A nearby garage that can work on older British cars can be very useful for things that are beyond your skills. There aren't many garages dedicated to these cars (see here for the best ones) but a good garage that can work on older British cars will be familiar with many of the systems and components on these cars as the factory used well-known British suppliers (Lucas, Smiths, Girling, Jaeger etc.).

The Downsides

It's also worth mentioning a few of the downsides of classic car ownership.

Perhaps you have dreams of breezing-down sunlit country roads with the wind in your hair? Yes, that does happen occasionally, but traffic, bad weather and inconsiderate drivers occur just as much when you're driving a classic as a modern car (although many drivers are more considerate to classics, as long as they aren't travelling behind them - there seems to be an inherent assumption that classic cars must be overtaken).

If you've never driven an older car you may also be surprised at how different they are to modern cars. Generally the controls are similar, although there was much more freedom to innovate before regulations confined the scope of designers. But few classics are old enough to have electronic engine management (and certainly no Rover P5 and P5B's ever had this fitted), so there's skill to be learned in starting and warming-up an engine, and then driving it. Your brain has to be the engine management system. If your car doesn't have power steering then the effort needed to park will be a surprise, and the lack of things like air conditioning, central locking and electric windows can take some adjustment.

Fuel consumption can be 'interesting'. A P5 or P5B will do 16-18 mpg typically, even if driven carefully, so expect fairly high fuel bills (mind you, I once borrowed a V8 Range Rover and I'm still mentally scarred from filling the tank).

It's also very easy to be seduced by the prospect of low-cost home maintenance, relatively cheap insurance, zero Vehicle Excise Duty on historic vehicles, the upcoming MOT exclusion, and zero depreciation. But classics need regular servicing and maintenance to maintain their value in normal times, and may need considerable expenditure to sort-out poor maintenance or 'bodged' repairs.

Rover P5 and P5B Buyers Guide - Other Sources"

As mentioned above, read as much as you can before buying:

- One of the better and more succinct buyers guides is available on the P5 Owners Club website. Here's a link to their buyers guide:
 - <http://www.roverp5club.org.uk/buyers%20guide.pdf>
- A good article on the Classic Motoring website:
 - <http://www.classiccars4sale.net/classic-car-review/aa-rover-p5>

- Here's an article and current average valuations on the Hagerty Insurance website:
 - <https://www.hagertyinsurance.co.uk/price-guide/1968-Rover-P5>
- Here's another article that might be useful on the Classic Cars For Sale website:
 - <http://www.classiccarsforsale.co.uk/reviews/classic-rover-reviews/1503/rover-p5b-review/>

Finally, good luck with your purchase and [don't forget to subscribe!](#)

Richard.

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