

autos

Your guide to smart wheels and great deals

Delivering your baby

Long-distance car shippers specialize in precious cargoes

By Gene Stout / Special to Autos

You finally found your dream car, a 1969 Jaguar E-type in Carmine Red with black leather. And the price is right.

But you're in Seattle, and the car is in Boston.

You wouldn't think of a grueling cross-country road trip with your newly purchased prize, even if you had the time and the car was up to the journey.

So someone else will have to do the heavy lifting and hauling. But who? Fortunately, there are dozens of carriers who transport collector cars as well as personal vehicles. But be sure to do your homework.

You'll want to know how much it will cost and how long it will take. When hiring a carrier, be sure to follow the checklist on page G3.

For a collectible or enthusiast car, whether it's 1959 Rambler or a six-figure Lamborghini, experts say it's important to find an auto transport company that will give your vehicle the kid-glove treatment it deserves.

"Unfortunately some of the drivers out there treat collectible cars like they're just freight," says custom sport-car builder and restorer Jim Simpson of Whidbey Island. "That's really not OK."

Simpson is the owner of Simpson Designs, which started in Texas and has been in business more than 40 years. In addition to restorations, he and his crew design and build one-off sports cars for well-heeled clients who expect cars to arrive in pristine



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A 1954 Packard Pacific hardtop is loaded for its trip from Seattle to Garwood, New Jersey.

condition.

Simpson ships four to 10 cars a year, many of them cross-country. Among the auto transporters he uses are Intercity Lines, Thomas C. Sunday, Passport Transport, White Lightning Auto Transport of Puyallup and a local guy for shorter hauls.

Though enclosed trailers are safer, Simpson says he's never had an issue shipping a car on an open trailer.

"In all the years we've been doing this, I have never had a car damaged on an open carrier," he says. "But yes, they show up filthy a lot of times."

Some top-rated auto transporters will secure a car with web straps that go over the tires.

"If you have a restored car, do you really want to put a chain over a freshly detailed frame?" Simpson says. "Of course not."

So what does it cost to ship a collectible car cross-country?

"For an open transport to go from here to Philadelphia, it would kind of be in the \$1,700 to \$1,800 range," Simpson says. "And in an enclosed trailer, it would be about \$2,400 to \$4,000, depending on who is doing it."

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Vintage cars are loaded onto a carrier operated by Monster Trucking at a February auto auction in Palm Springs, California.

Long-haul shippers deal with precious cargoes

Continued from G1

Intercity Lines, based in Warren, Massachusetts, charges \$2,495 to ship a car from the Northeast to the Northwest in one of its plush, enclosed "air ride" trailers — slightly less in the opposite direction. But other variables, including scheduling and the size of the vehicle, can affect rates.

"Going east we need cars, so we run at a discounted

\$2,295," says Dean Wilson, vice president of marketing for the company founded by his parents, David and Linda Wilson, in 1980.

Intercity Lines, a favorite carrier of car collector and former "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno, as well as Wayne Carini of TV's "Chasing Classic Cars," has expanded its presence in the Northwest and is now working

with Ferrari North America to deliver cars to Northwest dealerships.

When searching for a carrier, most people use Google, which often leads them to brokers and not directly to quality carriers.

"A broker will typically be able to time the service a little better and be a little cheaper, but you don't know the actual carrier that's

going to transport your car, what their standards are and what their equipment is like," Wilson says.

"And if something goes wrong, you could be chasing two different companies who are playing the blame game with each other, instead of dealing with a reputable carrier that's going to do what it takes to make it right," he says.

IS EVERYTHING SHIP-SHAPE?

- Never fill the gas tank. Why risk a leak?
- Check the antifreeze, especially if the carrier is traveling through mountain passes.
- Check the tire pressure for safe loading and unloading.
- Secure loose items in the vehicle.
- Turn off the alarm. Why risk a dead battery?

AND DON'T FORGET ...

- Does the company have insurance that covers its cargo? Ask to see the policy.
- Does the carrier have a U.S. Department of Transportation number? Is it following all federal regulations?
- Find out where your car will be delivered, since many 18-wheelers can't negotiate narrow streets.



INTERCITY LINES

A 1957 Chevy is loaded into an Intercity "air ride" trailer.

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Last month (5/1)	\$2.94	\$2.37
Last year (6/1/16)	\$2.64	\$2.32