

CLASSIC DRIVER

Do you need to pay tariffs when importing classic cars into the US?

Lead

For many collectors in the USA, sourcing a classic car from Europe or beyond is an exciting prospect. But with new tariffs imposed by the Trump administration, could importing your dream machine become a costly endeavor? We break down the latest trade policies to help you avoid unexpected expenses.

For any enthusiast with dreams of owning a classic Ferrari, Porsche, or Aston Martin sourced from the picturesque streets of Europe, the latest wave of tariffs imposed by the Trump administration could pose an unexpected roadblock. But do these new trade policies really affect the importation of classic automobiles, or is there still a way to circumvent the looming financial burden?



Understanding the Tariffs

The latest regulations, largely targeted at China and the European Union, aim to protect American industries by imposing a steep 25% tariff on foreign goods from April 3rd onwards. While these measures primarily focus on industrial materials and modern vehicles, they also encompass certain automotive categories. However, the good news is classic cars—more specifically those over 25 years old—are not subject to this new increase in tariffs.

The 25-Year Rule: A Loophole for Classic Collectors?

According to US import law, any vehicle over 25 years old is considered exempt from modern safety and emissions regulations, making it easier for collectors to bring in vintage treasures without modification. But how do the new tariffs fit into this equation? Fortunately, page 10 of the executive order states: “On or after April 3, 2025, vehicles that are at least 25 years old at the time of entry will be fully exempt from the 25 percent tariff on imported passenger vehicles and light trucks, under heading 9903.94.04, regardless of origin, make or model.” This means that, in most cases, if your chosen classic meets the 25-year rule, you should be able to import it at the standard 2.5% duty rate without additional penalty.



Potential Pitfalls and Exceptions

While the general rule suggests that most vintage vehicles will not be affected, there are caveats to consider. If the car has been significantly modified or restored to a condition that resembles a modern iteration, customs officials could classify it differently, potentially subjecting it to higher tariffs. Similarly, if you are purchasing a rare or limited-production car that falls into a specialty classification, it's wise to consult with an import specialist to avoid unexpected fees.



The Future of Classic Car Imports

For now, it seems that the world of classic car collecting remains largely insulated from these geopolitical trade skirmishes. However, with ongoing fluctuations in trade policy, it's always prudent to stay informed and verify the latest import regulations before committing to an overseas purchase. As always, the golden rule of collecting applies: buy the best example you can afford [and find in the Classic Driver Market](#), and don't let bureaucracy dampen your passion for automotive heritage!

Photos: Classic Driver Archive / Porsche / Broad Arrows Group

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