

## The Bentley Experience

Mention the name Bentley and two things spring to mind, motor sport and sporting luxury cars.

Founded by W O Bentley back in 1919 from humble beginnings the company has become one of the most famous names in motoring, coming under the Volkswagen Group banner in 1998.

Had it not have been for the new ownership many wonder if the marquee would have survived, one which won the Le Mans 24 Hour Race no less than six times, the last victory in 2003 and for motor racing fans a return is imminent.



Recently I spent a couple of days with Bentley which included a visit to the factory in Crewe, a town strongly associated with Bentley and the railway and of course the opportunity to get behind the wheel of one of their cars.

Today the modern Bentley bristles with technology yet there is still that classic feel of yesteryear. The two come together to give a highly desirable motor car and one which has been lovingly put together by a skilled workforce.

The factory occupies some 700 acres and many of the buildings have remained the same exterior wise that is. Walking through the factory I found a thoroughly modern work place, indeed it

has a rather relaxed atmosphere not what you might expect in such an environment.

It was pleasing to witness so many skilled people at work, with some 20 per cent of the jobs being done by women.

While I may never ever purchase a Bentley I was given the opportunity to be treated like a customer and I can tell you it is very special, the opportunity is provided to spec your own car and the choice is vast and it all depends on how much you have in your bank account.

With the factory visit over it was time to take the wheel of a car, so I opted for a Continental GT V8, you could say the entry point to Bentley and with a price tag just proud of £160, 00. Of course this was with a host of options.

My test car was finished in a very distinct shade of burnt orange, perhaps not to everyone's taste, but it would be on my colour choice if ever the day was to come that I could afford such a set of wheels.

What appealed most to me about the Continental GT, the manner in which performance and luxury fuse. I can think



of few cars that achieve this.

Yes the Continental GT is a Grand Tourer and perhaps best suited on a drive across Europe rather than the English and Welsh roads which I encountered.

Right at the heart of the matter a superb sounding four litre V8 with in excess of 500bhp, enough to whisk you from rest to 62mph in 4.6 seconds and if you have a friend who owns a racing circuit then the chance to explore its top speed – 188mph.

Economy, well I suppose if you have the money to purchase such a car, then the price of fuel is hardly an issue, but for the record, the combined fuel figure is 26.7mpg.

Despite its generous dimensions the Continental GT V8 handles like a sports car



aided by all wheel drive and the ride is firm but very comfy, what you would expect from a luxury car.

Alas my time was short with the Bentley, perhaps at some future date the opportunity may arise again.

As a parting shot I had better mention some of the options fitted to the car I sampled. A superb Naim Premium entertainment system (£5,475), ceramic brakes (£10,405), emblem stitching (£480). Yes you can even have your own emblem, in fact it seems there is no end to the options you can have with a Bentley.

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