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Bentley Bentayga V8 – First Impressions

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Chris Adamson samples a thoroughly modern Bentley

(Words and photographs by Chris).



In recent months the domestic motoring community has been dominated by discussions about fuel economy, alternative fuels, battery power and the UK's electricity re-charging infrastructure and I have not been immune from getting immersed in the debate.

So it was something of a refreshing change to be able to get behind the wheel of a new vehicle that is most definitely not politically correct – a £136,000 monster of an SUV that adds almost 300 g/km of Co2 into the atmosphere every time it is fired up and is unlikely to get better than 20 miles to the gallon of our rapidly depleting oil supplies.

Meet the Bentley Bentayga V8, a luxury family run-around that is most definitely an indulgence and one that only a very few families are actually going to be able to afford.

Once upon a time prestige brands such as Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Maserati, Ferrari and Aston Martin would have vehemently denied any aspirations for creating an off-roader, but now every manufacturer has one either already on the market or in the final design stages.

Take away the badges and grilles and it's hard to tell the premier SUVs apart and the Bentley is no different; the giant proportions of the panel work are only interrupted by the occasional historic references such as the shape of the grille and the circular headlights plus repeat centenary badges, otherwise it could be one of many now in the showrooms.



With the basic components of an SUV the same for everyone, what each of these marques needs to do is focus on what makes it different – and for me it's the cabin that marks out a Bentley and thankfully Crewe has not failed me here.

Inside there is a classic timeless Britishness that is characteristically Bentley – it's a sort of comfortable gentleman's club on wheels highlighted by the distinctive stitching for the leather surfaces and door panels (Bentley describes it as a Porpoise stitch) complemented by a touch of modernity supplied by sections of carbon fibre framed by chrome.

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Rather than go overboard on textured surfaces Bentley's cabin crafters have wisely stuck with a limited palette; in this case a single tone in Cricket Ball red that extends to the dashboard, diamond quilted seating and centre console. This is complemented by black painted trim on areas such as the side window surrounds, wing vents and door handles

As you would expect Bentley offers plenty of personalisation on the Bentayga. On the example I was driving there were features such as drilled alloy sport pedals and embroidered Bentley wing emblems.

Comfort goes with the package so there are ventilated, quilted and perforated leather electric front seats with massaging function, thick carpeting and substantial arm rests.

Drivers are presented with an efficient array of instrumentation; although digital in execution they stick very much with a familiar analogue layout which is reassuring and informative.

Other functions are operated and displayed through the large central display screen that fits neatly into its carbon fibre surround with clear and smoothly operating controls.

Overall the well-appointed cabin offers loads of passenger and luggage space, while the boot will hold 431 litres (15.22 cu.ft) with all the seats occupied and this can be more than tripled by dropping down the rear seats.



On the Road

One facet of driving the Bentayga is something of a conundrum... and that is the sounds you hear and that you really ought to be hearing.

With its acres of sound proofing the only noise you detect inside that well-appointed cabin is drubbing from the tyres - the 22 inch five spoke alloys are surprisingly quite voluble while what you really want to be hearing is the bark of the 550 PS 4 litre V8 engine with its twin-



scroll turbochargers.

I discovered that the only way to really appreciate the sound of the cylinders and the exhaust is to stand by the side of the road as it passes at full chat – then close your eyes and it could almost be a trans-Atlantic muscle car hammering past.

The glorious tones are sadly excluded from the vehicle occupants – unless you can be tempted to wind down the windows and appreciate the twin-turbo effect.

Driving modes include Sport, Comfort, Custom and one simply labelled Bentley – this is the factory setting and why anyone would want to change the settings from those fine-tuned by a team of highly qualified technicians I am not sure because it fits the character of the Bentayga perfectly with just a hint of sportiness without getting too aggressive.

If you want your driving experience all fast and furious then by all means engage Sport or if you want to be cosseted and insulated from the driving experience then go for the Comfort mode – but if you want to fully appreciate the Bentayga then leave it to the Bentley boys (and girls).

Using the eight-speed ZF automatic transmission either through the central shift lever or the steering wheel paddles is no hardship and if you feel the need you can drop down a cog and boot the throttle for a major injection of pace, overtaking is effortless.



An SUV really ought not to be this quick (60mph in just four seconds) which initially brings to mind concerns about the chassis being able to cope with quick changes of direction should the Bentayga get off the motorway.

No fear, the double wishbone front and Trapezoidal multi-link rear suspension with self-levelling air dampers and electric active anti-rolls bars is remarkably adept at hustling you round corners without experiencing excesses of body roll.

With its speed assisted electric power steering the Bentayga is remarkably composed on the road and turns out to be a real driver's car, feeding back just enough information to accurately position it at all times.

If you should have a requirement to venture off road then the permanent all-wheel drive, Torsen centre differential and open rear differential with electronic lock should be able to heave you through most of the mud although it would be a shame to threaten to get that interior dirty.



VERDICT

WO might shudder in his grave at the thought of Bentley making a 'utility' vehicle but I think he would approve of the way they have put it all together.

Bentayga isn't the prettiest of cars or the most distinctive to look at but it still somehow



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manages to exude all the essential Bentley character; inside it looks right and behind the wheel it drives right.... now all I have to do is start saving.



Wheels-Alive Tech Spec. in Brief:

Bentley Bentayga V8

Engine: 3996cc V8

Transmission: Eight-speed automatic



Power: 550PS @ 6,000 rpm

Torque: 770 Nm (568 lb.ft) @ 1960 - 4,500 rpm

Performance:

0-62 mph: 4.5 seconds

Top Speed: 180 mph

Fuel Consumption (WLTP Official Figures):

Combined: 21.7 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 296 g/km

Price (On the Road): £136,200