Bentley Continental GT – Road Test

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Author: Robin Roberts

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A Bentley Continental GT V8 pictured above the Rhymney Valley in South East Wales.
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The Bentley Continental GT V8 Coupé…

GT is a very overused abbreviation but fully justified as a suffix to the Bentley Continental, *writes Robin Roberts (and* Motoring Milestones); *images by Mediaphotos.co.uk.*

This 191 inch (4.85 metre) long two-door coupe oozes ability to cover immense distances without complaint and cocooned in complete luxury; the original Grand Tourer for the wealthiest of owners.

Of course, such excellence does not come cheap and today's Bentley Continental GT maintains an air of aristocracy with its ability and a price to match.

The Continental series accounts for 40% of Bentley sales, 60% of them are the V8 and just under a third go to America, the company's biggest market for the V8, while the UK is fourth behind Europe and China but ahead of Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

The extensive list of options fitted to the test car added up to £47,250, taking the invoiced price to £202,050. The £14,760 Mulliner Driving Specification is a cosmetic choice with black and polished 22-inch alloys, distinctive leather upholstery and embroidery; while the Touring Specification at £6,415 comprises a number of safety and convenience programmes, the hugely impressive Bang and Olufsen audio is a premium system adding £5,125, and the dynamic ride is yours for £4,085.

At the Bentley Continental GT's heart is a highly sophisticated and very refined 4.0 litre V8 petrol engine with twin-scroll turbochargers between the banks of cylinders which give a near linear power delivery and yet under light load one bank shuts down to save fuel but instantly responds to demand and throttle position.



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Power is delivered through a well-engineered ZF automatic eight-speed transmission to an intelligent four-wheel-drive system that apportions traction as required by the wheels' sensors.

The result is fuel consumption which can head towards 30 mpg on particular journeys but overall we achieved 25 mpg, which was something to think about because we were not very heavy footed.

The incredible smoothness of the engine was matched by that of the gearbox with silken changes under any load whether going up or down the transmission and even in the

sportiest of the four modes available it never failed to impress with its creamy changes.

With a maximum speed close to 200 mph, 0 – 62 mph dispatched in 4 seconds and 100 mph reached in just over 8 seconds you need good brakes and the Bentley Continental GT's 42 cm (16.54 in) front and 38 cm (14.96 in) rear brakes with multi-piston calipers were really up to the job and among the most powerful I've ever experienced. Beautifully balanced between progression and performance they dragged down the 2.1 tonnes car without drama or delay or you could feather them to a stop on the lightest application, while the parking brake securely held on our usual test hill.

Despite being a big car, the steering wheel was not very large and while you may think this might have demanded a lot of turning or made it twitchy, the variable ratio electric assistance was inspiring with its precision and effect. Ok, it was a big car to park in town, but it really handled like a much smaller model on open twisting roads and that's the mark of a properly sorted performance car.

Most frequently used secondary controls were all close to hands around the column or on wheel-spokes and operated with a satisfying cushioned feel. The less important buttons were grouped along the fascia or on the console with some inserted into a touchscreen when not in great demand.

Our test car was fitted with fairly standard large, clear to read main instruments infront of the driver and came with Bentley's optional rotating display for secondary gauges in the centre of the dash which changed from plain veneer to normal or sporting gauges depending on the driver's chosen mode. A truly brilliant piece of engineering even if a very focused £4,820 option.



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Heating and ventilation was remarkable in such a big 2+2 cabin with powerful fan, wide temperature control and retro pull-push knobs for the directional vents. Heated and cooling seats were very welcome with the option of a multi-choice massaging function, powered bolsters, cushion length and headrests, another £3,180.

Room in front was very good for legs, heads and arms, while the back pair of seats were not so generous for room but proved extremely comfortable. Access to them was slightly fiddly but once seated the vision from them was good to the sides.



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The driver enjoyed good all round vision helped by radar sensors for traffic and sensors and cameras when manoeuvring. Very long range, bright headlights gave added safety at night and the wiper/ wash system was very effective.

Oddments room was reasonable, not exceptional in a car of great touring ability, while the 12.6 cu. ft. (356.8 litres) boot space was large for a 2+2 coupe, of a good shape and easy to load or empty, essential pre-requisites for a touring holiday.



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A lot of thought and effort has gone into noise suppression in the Continental GTV8 and it is a very tranquil traveller with a muted engine note, unless strong acceleration is needed when a pleasant roar emits from the exhausts. Other mechanical noises are extremely low apart from the wide 22-inch tyres on poor tarmac at low speed. Even at motorway speed the Continental GTV8 is exceptionally quiet until you kick-down to overtake.

It would be wrong to think of this as a pure motorway cruiser. It will do that without question and without complaint, but where it really impresses is on cross country trips, through winding lanes, countryside, valleys or moors and these are gobbled up mile after mile as we found on our round trip to West Wales.

Power response is instant, strong with 568 lb.ft (770 lb.ft) torque and generally is just waiting to be unleashed.

Alter the driving modes from economy to sporting and you instantly get even more urge from under your foot, sharpness through the steering and tauter temperament from a sportier feeling suspension.

VERDICT

Its character changes and you appreciate this is an expensive car, but in reality it’s not one car but several with their own personalities portrayed and revealed.

You emerge from the Continental GT V8 Coupé feeling unstressed, at one with the world and ready for that Grand Tour of Europe when it is again allowed or West Wales if it’s not.

For: Sophisticated, refined, comfortable, excellent powertrain performance, roomy with very large boot.

Against: Big to park, high fuel consumption, expensive options and taxation penalties.



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Posh Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Bentley Continental GT V8 Coupe.

Price: £154,800.

Mechanical: 550 PS 4.0 litre twin-turbo V8, 8-speed, AWD.

Performance: 198 mph, 0 – 62 mph 4.0 seconds, combined mpg on test 25 mpg, CO2 268 g/km.

Tax costs: VED First Year £2,245, Standard rate annually for 5-years £490, BiK executive company car tax max 37% rate.

Insurance Group: 50.

Warranty: 3-years/unlimited miles.

Size: L 4.85 m (15.91 ft), W 2.19 m (7.19 ft), H 1.41 m (4.63 ft).

Boot space: 358 litres (12.64 cu.ft).

Kerbweight: 2,165 kg (4,773 lb).