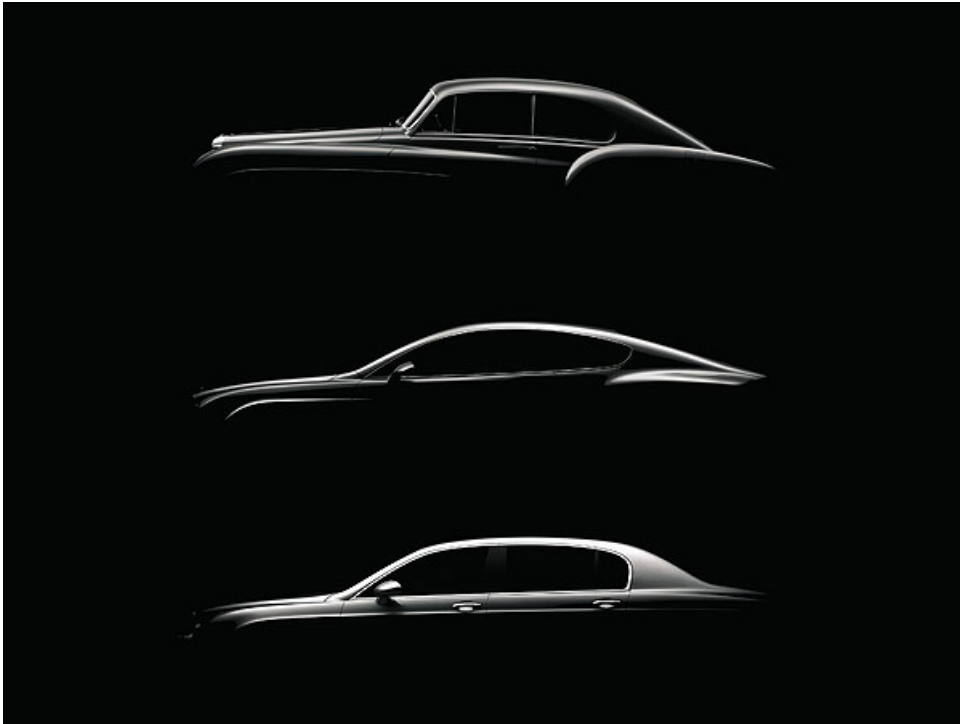


CLASSIC DRIVER



Bentley Continental Flying Spur

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The history

Text/Photos: Bentley

Now, only 12 months after the first deliveries of Continental GT, Bentley announces the arrival of the fastest four-door in the company's history; a car that shares the heart and soul of the 198mph coupe from which it is born - the Continental Flying Spur.

Throughout its history, Bentley has offered a blend of luxury and potent performance. The ability to undertake long journeys in great comfort has been the hallmark of every Bentley, and never was that better demonstrated than in the iconic R-Type Continental from 1952 and its four-door descendant, the Continental Flying Spur.

Bred from the fastest four-seat coupe of its time, the original 1957 Continental Flying Spur was hailed as one of the most elegant and yet powerful saloons ever created. The new Continental Flying Spur continues that Bentley bloodline of sporting Grand Tourers. Similarly inspired by the most desirable coupe of its day, it delivers awesome performance as well as extraordinary comfort and elegance.

Like the original Flying Spur, the new Bentley is also purposely positioned as a premium product above a crowded market. When asking its future customers about their needs they were very clear - performance and luxury, style and practicality, inspiration and solidity, excitement and safety. The Continental Flying Spur is the company's response to this 'no compromise' attitude.



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The design

When work began on the Continental GT coupe in 1999, a simultaneous programme was instigated for a four-door version that would mirror the performance and design qualities of the coupe and also provide unparalleled levels of space and comfort in a way that only a Bentley can. The results of that forward-thinking approach are now clear as the Continental Flying Spur is unveiled for the first time.



These clear and simple targets were laid down to Bentley's head of design, Dirk van Braeckel, when the project began, and he made sure that they were not forgotten as the car's form began to take shape.

"We were very conscious that the Continental Flying Spur had to make a sporting statement when people first saw it - after all it is a Bentley," says van Braeckel. "That's actually more challenging with a four-door than a coupe, which will always look 'fast', so we spent a long time working on an appearance of potency while still retaining the presence and stature that customers expect from our cars."

"From the very beginning, Bentleys have been quite reserved when it comes to design," says van Braeckel. "It has always been recognised that they are much less ostentatious than rival cars of a similar price. The new Continental Flying Spur embodies that Bentley ethos of understated elegance."

The Continental Flying Spur consequently shares the clean and muscular appearance of the Continental GT coupe with a short front overhang and dominant matrix radiator grille. Inside the

cabin, the car has a similarly stunning appearance with a beautiful interior that will stand as a benchmark thanks to its quality and craftsmanship.

The generous wheelbase of the Continental Flying Spur's chassis means spacious rear legroom for passengers and an impressive canvas on which Bentley's interior design team could set to work. Customers will have the option of a four-seat layout with a central console between two electrically-powered rear seats or a five-seat cabin with full-width rear seat.



Driving dynamics

With 552bhp at its disposal, and an advanced all-wheel drive system to ensure that power is delivered in a controlled and measured fashion, the Continental Flying Spur has the performance to match its appearance.

In common with the Continental GT coupe, the car's extremely stiff steel chassis allows the advanced air suspension system to regulate safely the handling and balance of a four-door with supercar performance: a top speed in excess of 190mph and 0-62mph (100km/h) in around five seconds.

"Over the course of its development the car was subjected to a rigorous drive programme that saw it complete nearly a million miles on proving grounds, test tracks and roads across the world," reveals Dr Ulrich Eichhorn, member of the board, engineering. "The result is a car whose breadth and capability, in any weather, on any road surface, is simply awesome."

The Continental GT coupe's twin-turbocharged, 12-cylinder engine with a smooth, six-speed 'paddleshift' ZF gearbox with Tiptronic actuation is carried over into the Continental Flying Spur. Maximum torque is available from just 1600rpm and continues unabated throughout the powerband, meaning the driver can call upon exceptional reserves of power in an instant.

Bentley chairman Dr Franz-Josef Paefgen says the distinction between the new Continental Flying Spur and the Bentley Arnage range is simple:

"As Continental Flying Spur production begins, the Arnage will retain its true position as the most exclusive limousine in the world. If you work in a major capital city you might see a Continental Flying Spur a few times a month, but you will only come across an Arnage a few times a year. The Arnage will continue to be a bespoke car with real exclusivity.

"With the Continental Flying Spur we are opening our doors to new customers who value that unique combination of luxury, style, excitement and practicality. Nowhere else will they be able to enjoy a car that possesses all this as well as the dynamic qualities and power of the Continental GT coupe. The Continental Flying Spur promises a new motoring experience and we look forward to welcoming a

new breed of discerning customers to our marque."

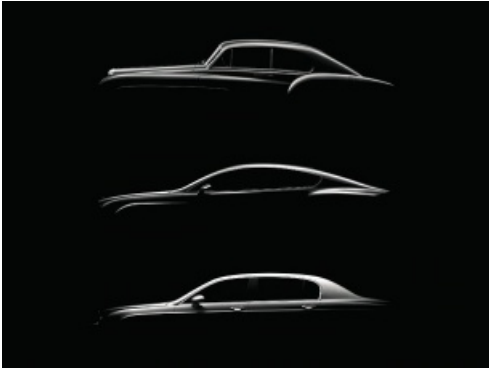


The Facts

Motor:	6,0 Litre Twinturbo W12
Power:	552bhp
Torque:	480lb ft @ 1,500rpm
Transmission:	Six-speed ZF automatic with 'paddle-shift', four-wheel drive
Weight:	2,500kgs
Acceleration:	0 - 100kmh/62mph in 5.1 seconds
Top speed:	305kmh/198mph
Price & availability:	On sale in Spring 2005, for a similar price to the GT



Gallery



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