

CLASSIC DRIVER

The 600bhp Bentley Continental GT Speed



Bentley has revised its super-succesful Continental GT range with small styling changes, lighter weight, and improved emissions and fuel consumption. The big news however, is the launch of a 600bhp version that will top out at 202mph (326km/h). The new car will be called 'Continental GT Speed' as a nod to the 'Speed' models that first appeared in 1923.

The standard Bentley 3-litre had already established the company's engineering superiority in terms of roadholding, handling and braking, but W.O. Bentley, the company's founder, recognised the market potential for a more potent version aimed at the enthusiast driver who demanded superior performance. His response, the 3-litre 'Speed Model', complete with twin SU carburettors and a higher compression ratio engine, became one of the most coveted of all Bentleys.

New for the 2008 model year on both models is a wider, lower air intake and more upright radiator grille that also provides increased airflow to the more powerful GT Speed.

The more powerful motor has new, lighter, con rods to enhance engine response, while new pistons, with anodised compression ring grooves, are designed to withstand increased cylinder pressures. Together with a recalibrated version of the new engine management system, the GT Speed develops nine percent more power than the GT - 600bhp (610PS) at 6000 rev/min. The maximum torque of 750Nm (553lb ft) at 1750 rev/min represents an increase of over 15 percent versus the standard engine. As a result, the GT Speed becomes the first production Bentley to top 200mph (322km/h), with a V-max of 202mph (326km/h).



To go with the Continental GT Speed's high performance is its unique chassis tuning that delivers tauter handling and improved agility, with new, wider 9.5J 20-inch wheels and bespoke performance tyres as standard. Fade-resistant carbon ceramic brakes are available as an option. Subtle design touches, including a dark-tinted front grille and larger sports tailpipes, give the Continental GT Speed a look apart. The new car also has wider rifled sports exhaust tail pipes and a Mulliner Driving Specification (also available as an option on the Continental GT) that includes: drilled alloy sport foot-pedals, knurled chrome/hide gearlever, diamond quilted hide to seat facings, doors and rear quarter panels.

The enhanced chassis will give a more sporting driving experience via the following changes over standard: Lowered ride height, uprated spring/damper settings and uprated anti-roll bars for improved agility and body control, superior grip from unique 9.5Jx20 wheels with bespoke Pirelli P-Zero performance tyres, and improved steering response achieved through retuned speed-sensitive Servotronic system, solid-mounted front subframe and stiffer rear bushings.



Both revised models also feature:

35kg (77lb) reduction in kerb weight due primarily to optimisation of suspension and cooling system components.

Increased use of aluminium parts in suspension benefits steering feel and rolling comfort.

Revised Servotronic power steering gives improved feel and feedback.

Optional fade-resistant carbon ceramic brakes provide improved brake feel (only available on 20-inch wheels). The discs will last lifetime of car and pad life is doubled (in normal driving conditions).

New, more upright front grille and larger lower air intakes give improved airflow, to aid engine cooling.

Chromed headlamp bezels.

Two new exterior paint colours (Cumbrian Green and Granite).

Two new leather hide colours (Newmarket Tan and Cumbrian Green).





The GT Speed's cabin (based on that of the Mulliner Driving Specification) includes a choice of veneers (Burr Walnut, Dark Stained Burr Walnut and Piano Black), Diamond-quilted hide seats with embroidered Bentley emblem, indented hide headlining, a sports alloy gearlever, three-spoke multi-function sports steering wheel, drilled alloy foot-pedals as well as 'Speed' logos to the treadplates.

A range of Mulliner options provide further opportunities for personalisation including fascia panels, header and centre console in bright aluminium or, unique to the GT Speed, dark tint aluminium (compatible only with Dark Stained Burr Walnut veneer or Piano Black veneer and single tone interior colour scheme). The Continental GT also benefits from a new Bentley 'B' brake pedal.

Continental GT and GT Speed customers have a choice of 16 'standard' paint colours and 17 premium grade leather hide colours, including two new exterior paint colours (Cumbrian Green and Granite) and two new interior leather hide colours (Newmarket Tan and Cumbrian Green). Customers also have the option to select from the Arnage colour palette or choose Bentley's colour-matching programme to produce a bespoke colour of their choice.

The new Continental GT and GT Speed are available to order from August 2007.

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