

CLASSIC DRIVER

Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport Launched at Pebble Beach



The world's fastest roadster, launched to the press and public at Pebble Beach, is as instantly recognisable as its fixed-roof forebear. But the differences are far more substantial than simply removing the roof. The main challenge in creating the new Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport was to ensure that the exceptional strength and rigidity of the passenger cell wasn't compromised by slicing off a vital part of the monocoque. And that meant a complete redesign of the car's 'load paths'.

Given the huge demand from customers for an open-topped Veyron, it seemed that Bugatti had little choice but to develop the roadster. So, while the more obvious visual changes – aside from the transparent polycarbonate roof – are limited to the slightly higher windscreen and stylised daytime running lights, underneath the skin of the new 16.4 Grand Sport are a whole range of reinforcements. These include modifications to the side-skirts and transmission tunnel, while the B-pillars have been cross-stiffened using carbonfibre and the doors are of carbonfibre, too, housing an integrated longitudinal beam.



The result of all these changes is not only a safe, strong car, but one which suffers less torsional flexing than any other roadster.

Of most immediate interest, however, is that transparent roof. While the rigid roof cannot be folded up and stored within the car, it is swiftly removed and hung on a rack, at home. Then, should it rain, an innovative folding roof stored in the luggage compartment can be 'opened up like an umbrella' at any time. With this folding roof in place, speeds are limited to 130km/h; still, not too sluggish. Or only when compared with the 16.4 Grand Sport's usual top speeds: 407km/h when the rigid roof is on, or 360km/h when motoring in the open air.



Inside the Veyron, new equipment includes moisture-resistant, backstitched leather, and a reversing camera with a 2.7-inch monitor in the rear-view mirror. There's also a 'Puccini' sound system with digital signal processor.



Assembled by hand at Bugatti's HQ in Molsheim, the Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport will be available from March 2009 at a price of 1.4 million euros (excluding tax). Just 150 examples will be made, with the first 50 going exclusively to existing Bugatti customers. The first vehicle, chassis 001, was auctioned for charity at [Gooding & Company's Pebble Beach sale](#). It raised \$3.19 million.



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