

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Sleeping Beauty №10: Bentley Continental R/S/T](#)



‘Bentley’ and ‘Continental’ go very well together. No one does long-distance touring as well as the Crewe company, so when the Continental series of two-door four-seaters was introduced in 1991, the standard had been well and truly set.

If you wanted the most luxurious car to cover big distances at great speed, there was really no alternative: the £168,294, 360bhp, 150mph **Bentley Continental R** was the car to have. Powering the new range of coupés was **Bentley’s** magnificent turbocharged 6.75-litre V8. In addition to well over 350bhp, 553lb ft torque was available from just 2000rpm, making them lazily potent on an open road, strong acceleration instantly available at the merest hint of throttle.

Inside, the very finest hides and leather were distributed with the top-class craftsmanship you’d expect from **Bentley**. As a car made from 1991 to 2003, 1980s reds and golds are rare; most cars are finished in dark blue, green or grey with pleasant tans, blacks and magnolias inside. You will get the occasional yellow with red hide, to match a successful fish-and-chip-shop owner's Formica tables, but it’s a simple matter of walking away from that car.

The very idea. Really.

The initial model was the **Continental R**. The ‘S’ was intended as a limited-edition, higher-powered (400bhp) version and was introduced in 1994. Customers looking for the ultimate in performance were delighted when, in 1996, the company revealed the **Bentley Continental T**. This featured 2+2 bodywork, courtesy of a 4in reduction in wheelbase and a 420bhp (440bhp was an option) engine, this time with nigh-on 600lb ft of torque. The most powerful engine, combined with a lightened body, endowed the £220,313 **Bentley** with a 170mph top speed. It could cruise all day at 130 - 150mph.

Most ‘T’s were specified with diamond-pattern leather sports seats and an engine-turned dashboard – although you could, of course, have anything you wanted. **Bentley** customers are like that.

One last variation was added to the model line-up right at the end of the car’s life (when sales were still strong): the **Continental SC**. This was a ‘T’ with detachable Targa-style roof panels. For those of us who have to ask the price: to you, sir, it started at £245,000 per car.

Hand-built, fabulously expensive when new, hugely enjoyable to drive, good looking and mostly available in a discreet range of colours – the **Continental R/S/T** series has it all.

I've worked up quite a thirst for one of these. Have a look and see what's available in the [Classic Driver car database](#).

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