

CLASSIC DRIVER

Bentley Continental GT Speed Convertible: Kissed by the sun

Lead

Who needs speed when he can drink the light white wine of the Baden region in South West Germany? The area is known for its vineyards – and also sunshine, the perfect place for a ride in a convertible. We tried the latest 'Speed' version of the Continental Convertible; a 2013, a good vintage.

If this Bentley were a wine, it would be a serious Bordeaux

With its mighty W12 engine and imposing looks, if this Bentley were a wine, it would be a serious Bordeaux. But as the great vintages often take their toll the day after serious sampling, it wasn't to France that we steered the Bentley, but to Baden, in South West Germany. The sunny area famous for its crisp, light, white wines.

Accelerate like a Riva on a foaming lake



The mountain range known as the 'Kaiserstuhl', West of Freiburg, on the border of Alsace, rises in front of us like an island. We slip through the Rhine valley in our cashmere-coloured Bentley. While many high-end manufacturers list a convertible in their range, Bentley's fastest model always holds a special place in our hearts. We love the deep rumblings from the W12, which swell as the pedal is depressed. They soon rise to a torrent-like thunder and we then salute the acoustic engineers from Crewe for engineering such a sound. Driving the car is more akin to steering a powerful Riva on a foaming lake than a 625bhp/202mph supercar.

To the left, Sylvaner, to the right Grauer Burgunder – a drive through the lush grapevines



Breathing in the clear summer air, we glide through gently curving roads among the lush green vines. Numerous grape varieties can be seen on the terraces: from Müller-Thurgau and Silvaner, to Gewürztraminer, and Grauen and Weißen Burgundies. In almost every small town one can see some sort of wine cooperative. And there are also many winemakers dedicated to a certain grape. Names such as Freiherr von Gleichenstein, Dr. Heger, Professor Blankenhorn and Fritz Keller. Keller is also famous for his restaurant the 'Schwarzer Adler' (the 'Black Eagle') as well as the exclusive estate of his father, high up in the mountains. A strict policy of quality control and careful cultivation makes these wines well known far beyond the Baden region. And in the caves of Fritz Keller some exceptional vintages can be found. So, calculating that the boot of our Bentley can hold a volume of 260 litres, we decided to go on a shopping spree.

You can taste the flavour of a Bentley



The concept of sustainability, well-practiced in the Kaiserstuhl region, has a friend in the latest Bentley. After all, its consumption is improved by 15 per cent against its predecessor. And thanks to the permanent four-wheel-drive system, the most remote vineyard is within your grasp. Plus, should it rain on your journey from Achkarrer Schlossberg to Ihringer Winklerberg, you are safe in the knowledge that the triple-layer fabric hood will withstand even a monsoon.

There remains one question to answer: if some wines evoke the fine strings of Mozart, which vintage echoes the 12-cylinder *basso profondo* of the 2013 Continental GT Speed Convertible? From our trip, we would recommend a good Bassgeige Grauburgunder from Franz Keller.

Photos: Jan Baedeker

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