


CLASSIC DRIVER



2002 Bentley Azure

Lot sold	USD 105 069 - 131 337 GBP 80 000 - 100 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	2002	Condition	Used
Chassis number	SCBZK26E03CH011	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	271		

Description

2002 Bentley Azure Mulliner Convertible
Coachwork by H J Mulliner, Park Ward Ltd
Registration no. to be advised
Chassis no. SCBZK26E03CH01159

So far, the Bentley resurgence had relied on models whose basic architecture was shared with other Rolls-Royce products; but also on display at Geneva in '85 was Project 90, a mocked-up coupé intended to gauge public response to the idea of a high-performance car unique to Bentley. When the real thing - the Bentley Continental R - was unveiled six years later, the waiting crowd burst into spontaneous applause. Styled with the assistance of consultants International Automotive Design, the Continental R benefited from computer-aided design and wind tunnel testing in the devising of its sleekly streamlined shape. Despite the need to incorporate non-traditional features such as doors recessed into the roof, the result looked every bit a Bentley, albeit one restated for the 1990s. Also new was the gearbox, a four-speed automatic with an 'overdrive' top ratio, but the main focus of interest was the newcomer's performance. Needless to say this was staggering, the combination of the Turbo R engine in the new wind-cheating shape cutting the 0-60mph time to under six seconds and boosting top speed to more than 150mph. Not only was the Continental R the fastest and most powerful Bentley of its day, it was also the most expensive production car in the world.

The Corniche convertible had been a major success for Rolls-Royce so it can have surprised few onlookers when a soft-top version of the Bentley Continental R was announced, albeit a full four years after the Coupé's introduction. Once again, Geneva was chosen to launch what would turn out to be the first Bentley model in several decades to use an entirely new name - 'Azure' - which, like 'Corniche' and 'Camargue', evoked exotic destinations in the South of France. The famous Italian styling house of Pininfarina a firm with unrivalled experience in the design of soft-top Gran Turismos had been chosen to develop the Azure on the four-seater Continental R platform, and there was no questioning that the result was most successful. Bodysells were assembled in Italy by Pininfarina, fitted with the automatic soft-top, painted and shipped back for finishing at Crewe. Mechanically similar to the Continental R, but with an engine further up-rated to 385bhp, the Azure was launched in 1995 and cost £215,000 in the UK. Hailed by its maker as, "the world's best convertible", the Azure lived up to that grand title, proving an immense success especially in North America where its combination of unmatched luxury, effortless performance, and soft-top style was found highly attractive.

From 1999 until the end of production, the Azure was also available in Mulliner 'Wide Body' specification. Introduced at the 1999 Geneva Motor Show, the aggressive-looking Mulliner could be ordered with special bespoke trim and additional equipment, and permitted the buyer the option of further customisation during the build process. Pricing varied by car, as equipment could be significantly different from one to the next depending on customer requirements. For the Azure Mulliner, Bentley's 6.75-litre V8 engine was up-rated, producing a maximum of 420bhp and 645lb/ft of torque, while the suspension was stiffened to improve the roadholding. When production ceased in 2003 a total of 1,403 Azures of all types had been built, of which only 154 were Mulliner 'Wide Body' models. The ultimate Azure, the Mulliner 'Wide Body' represents the height of motoring luxury and elegance; top-down touring was never more exclusive.

This rare 'Wide Body' Azure Mulliner has had only three owners. Supplied by Jack Barclay, it has covered only 20,560 miles from new and has just been serviced by a Bentley specialist at a cost of £5,000 having been in dry storage for the last five years. Described by the private vendor as in excellent condition throughout, this exclusive and collectible modern Bentley is offered with MoT to August 2020.

Bonhams 1793

Bonhams

AUCTIONEERS SINCE 1793

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