



THE
STIG

FAST LANE

Louise Alexander-O'Loughlin morphs into 'The Stig' to sit in the lap of luxury test-driving one of the world's most luxurious cars, the Bentley Bentayga, with a price tag on it that boasts 'only in your wildest dreams' or 'I've made it'.



PHOTO COPYRIGHT: H.R. OWEN

The Bentley Bentayga may just be the fastest, most powerful, luxurious and most exclusive SUV in the world. This elite and elegant hand crafted machine is not for the faint hearted, hitting 0-60mph in 4.0 seconds. The Stig (aka Lou) experienced how Bentley's SUV glides like a GT, tows up to 3,500kg with consummate ease and takes off-road conditions in its stride!

Ushered to 'my' car, at H.R. Owen's top selling dealership outside London, Brooklands, the home of British motor sport, a smart key entry system with its electronic mechanism opened the door of the Bentayga and the soft closing door feature shut me inside, leaving the world very much outside.

The cabin was impressive: its style, space and quality oozed with tradition. The wood, metal and leather interior with quilted hand sewn leather seats, its aroma and beauty, made me realise why the Bentley marque has always been much sought after. The steering wheel, a lot smaller than I had imagined for a two and a half ton car, I felt would be >>>

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Bentayga profile

Price: £160,200 (without options)
 Engine: 5950cc, W12 twin-turbo petrol
 Power: 600bhp @ 5000-6000rpm; torque 664lb ft @ 1350-4500rpm
 Efficiency: 21.6mpg (combined); CO2 296g/km
 Performance: 0-62mph 4.0sec, top speed 187mph
 Powertrain: 8-spd automatic, all-wheel drive
 Kerb weight: 2,440kg

It is very difficult to hold back in a car which has a 6.0L twin-turbocharged W12 engine with a breathtaking top speed of 187mph (301 km/h).



better suited to a sports car, however, that aside, I certainly loved the elevated driving position; it definitely gave me a sense of presence on the roads. Having been shown the Bentayga's eight-speed automatic gearbox, comprising four different on road modes and four more modes for off-roading, I was good to go and excited to see what this car could do.

Adjusting the luxurious seats to my desired position, I picked the 'wave' out of a choice of six different massage settings: I now understood why this car is the price of a small house somewhere, at £160,200 to be precise (without options). I could officially sleep in it.

Images of the Bentayga do not do justice to the balance of fine engineering fused with beautiful styling. It's not until coming face to face with this beast that I could see it is every inch a Bentley, with an aggressive stance and stature. Frankly, it's not the most beautiful of cars, but it's a Bentley, so all is forgiven with the marque's signature design traits: from ultra sharp power lines to the handcrafted interior, I found it utterly sensational. Bentley has definitely got the balance absolutely right between sporting prowess and SUV presence.

Innovative technology connects the driver of the Bentayga, and its passengers, with Bentley's most advanced, intuitive infotainment system. It has a level of ease and functionality like no Bentley before it: I felt so comfortable, it was like going for a drive with an old friend. >>>



Off I went, I was cruising, and although it was a spectacular ride, all I wanted to do was drive this car hard on an open road and put my foot down. I did pop the gear into sport mode which made me realise this beauty was hungry to race as I became aware of so much sophistication going on beneath me. The Bentayga still maintained a sense of control though: even on the tight, twisty bends of the road it felt amazing how together the car felt. Travelling at speed, it was obvious this SUV gives a thumping performance.

Bentley's continual pursuit for the most exquisite, the most powerful and the most unique automobiles for more than 95 years has resulted in the creation of a vehicle that offers unrivalled comfort and refinement with complete control, even in the harshest conditions.

The development programme for the Bentayga has been the most exhaustive in the Bentley brand's history, ranging across five continents. From the dirt and gravel of South Africa and the dunes of Dubai, to the muddy fields of Cheshire, and from -30°C in the frozen North Cape to searing 50°C desert heat, the Bentayga's ability to perform on any surface and even in the most extreme conditions has been proven.

I was fascinated by how this SUV informs the driver of speed: it quite literally pops up on the windscreen, also highlighting the speed limit of the road being used, so there is no excuse for going too fast! Seriously? It is very difficult to hold back in a car which has a 6.0L twin-turbocharged W12 engine with a breathtaking top speed of 187mph (301 km/h).

I drove much slower on my return to H.R. Owen, I really didn't want the experience to end. What an innovative and amazing creation from Bentley. ❖



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Website: www.hrowen.co.uk/bentley/locations/1545/bentley-surrey