

A JOYFUL CAR!

By *Tim Saunders,*
Motoring Correspondent

Giving joy and happiness is extremely rewarding. I know because I do this with the Bentley Flying Spur. Not something I envisaged when I was given the opportunity to evaluate it.

A car-loving friend of one of my daughters' is celebrating his 10th birthday and I take him and his family for a couple of spins as it is only a four-seater. He wants to look under the bonnet and shows me how to do this for which I am grateful; in fact it is the children who show me the special features of this car. Fraser really enjoys the experience and discovers how the suspension can rise electronically. His father Derek is 6ft 6 inches tall and soon realises that he can't stretch out in the front. Nevertheless the whole family can't help smiling at the wonderful V8 and its magnificent, quite literally breathtaking acceleration, which sees the seatbelts noticeably tighten. The first time this happens you wonder whether it will stop. The next time it takes place it is like a comforting embrace. It is quite phenomenal how much g-force is delivered and is perhaps most exquisite from 0 to 30mph. It is a real pleasure to drive and push the accelerator to the floor. A Cheshire-cat grin instantly spreads across my face. But sadly you can't do that for too long because it will break all speed limits incredibly quickly.

Later, my wife Caroline and I collect a painting from sprightly 85-year-old Olwyn Bowey RA. 'I do like that shade of green,' she says enthusiastically of the Bentley. Indeed the sage

green contrasts beautifully with the black painted twin-spoke wheels. Although our meeting is primarily about art, the conversation returns to four wheels. 'It's not every day one of these is parked outside my house,' she smiles, keen to go for a ride. Rushing to shut her front door she dashes for the front passenger seat quicker than someone half her age. 'I don't think I mind being the elderly artist having a late life thrill in a powerful car, even down the local lane,' she says. 'Quite a joke really — never having been near such a car.'

We are fortunate that we have picked reasonably wide country lanes and this large beast drives like a smaller sports car, certainly outgunning most other vehicles with its four-second nought to 60 time and its almost 200mph top speed. That rocket-like acceleration is second to none. We're extremely lucky not to meet any tractors. But it is a lazy man's automatic although there are paddle shifts either side of the steering wheel, for more engaging driving.

This magnificent Flying Spur sports saloon with its strong design, reminiscent of classics of the past, costs £160,200 but when all the extras are added it rises to an eye-watering £201,300.

'If I received £200 for my 19-year-old, 111,000-mile Ford Fiesta diesel,' I say to the children, 'How many Ford Fiestas like mine could you buy for this one Bentley?' Yes, 1,000. Imagine that. It does put things in perspective.

Founder and editor of 'Travel & motoring magazine', Tim Saunders is an advanced motorist and journalist. He has always been passionate about motoring and regularly reviews cars from the leading manufacturers.



FACTS AT A GLANCE

Bentley Flying Spur

Price: £160,200 (£201,300 with extras)

Engine: 4-litre V8

0 to 60mph: 4secs

Top speed: 198mph

Economy: 22mpg approx

Power: 542bhp

CO2: 288g/km

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