

## Lifestyle | Cars

A-Z car finder | Reviews | Advice | News | Great Drives | Leasing | Classic cars | Long-term tests | Garage

◆ PREMIUM

🏠 &gt; Lifestyle &gt; Cars &gt; Features

# Great British Drives: Bentley Continental GT in the spectacular Welsh borders

   
Save 16

The latest version of the Continental GT is a sublime grand tourer, although rural roads aren't its forte. CREDIT: JESSICA SAUNDERS

## MORE STORIES

- 1 Hydrogen fuel cell trains to run on British railways from 2022
- 2 We join the Liège-Brescia-Liège classic road rally
- 3 Hyundai i20 review: an underrated supermini with surprising sparkle
- 4 BMW X4 on long-term test: is this coupé-cum-SUV a segment too far?
- 5 'Self-aware' car launched at CES 2019

Subscribe now for unlimited access to our Premium articles

All Digital Access  
Free for 30 days, then £3 per week

Start free trial

Want to learn more? [View all subscriptions](#)

Follow 

By **Jeremy Taylor**

23 DECEMBER 2018 • 6:11AM



Colonel Sir George Everest was said to be a very grumpy civil servant. When his successor named a large mountain in Nepal in honour of the former Surveyor General of India, Sir George took serious offence.

The move was meant as a tribute to the geographer – his moniker put forward by the newly installed Andrew Scott Waugh, who himself made the first official observations of the Himalayan mountain in the 1850s.

The Royal Geographical Society had struggled to give Peak XV a name because of problems finding a native alternative that was easily pronounced. Chomolungma and Sagarmatha were two options.

It is not known if Sir George himself ever actually saw the great mountain, untamed by man for almost a century afterwards. Although he objected at the time, he would likely have been more annoyed that his surname would one day adorn a brand of window double-glazing.

What is also unclear is the exact whereabouts of his birth. He was baptised in London but some historians claim Sir George was born on the family estate at Crickhowell, in the beautiful Usk Valley, just south of the Black Mountains.



The Black Mountains are chock full of scenic vistas – and narrow roads CREDIT: MICHAEL ROBERTS/MOMENT OPEN

## MORE STORIES

- 1 Hydrogen fuel cell trains to run on British railways from 2022
- 2 We join the Liège-Brescia-Liège classic road rally
- 3 Hyundai i20 review: an underrated supermini with surprising sparkle
- 4 BMW X4 on long-term test: is this coupé-cum-SUV a segment too far?
- 5 'Self-aware' car launched at CES 2019

Subscribe now for unlimited access to our Premium articles

All Digital Access  
Free for 30 days, then £3 per week

Start free trial

Want to learn more? [View all subscriptions](#)

## FOLLOW THE TELEGRAPH

[Follow on Twitter](#) [Follow on Facebook](#)

[Follow on Instagram](#) [Follow on Pinterest](#)

The Telegraph • CARS

Ever considered  
car leasing?



Driving through Crickhowell's 19th century high streets bustling with weekend shoppers, there's no obvious evidence of Sir George's existence whatsoever. No Everest road, lane or street – just a note on the town's website that he lived in Gwernvale Manor, now the Manor Hotel. It has named a bistro in his honour – what would he have made of that?

A surveyor relies on precision tools and I'm certain Sir George would approve of our [Bentley Continental GT](#). Hand-built in Britain, this latest version is a sumptuously well-appointed grand tourer with the right name insignia on the bonnet.

The Bentley has an interior to match a Rolls-Royce, with leather and fine wood veneers at every touch. A 12-cylinder engine pulls along a slimline body that is 80kg lighter than the previous model. The 2+2 is capable of more than 200mph.

There's no chance of 50mph here in the winding valleys of the Black Mountains. We've traversed south from Crickhowell along the A40 to Abergavenny – today gridlocked with a food festival celebrating local produce – and north via Pandy onto the single-track road past Llanthony Abbey.



Perfectly preserved Crickhowell is home to the best high street in the UK CREDIT: JOHN MORRISON/ALAMY

## MORE STORIES

- 1 [Hydrogen fuel cell trains to run on British railways from 2022](#)
- 2 [We join the Liège-Brescia-Liège classic road rally](#)
- 3 [Hyundai i20 review: an underrated supermini with surprising sparkle](#)
- 4 [BMW X4 on long-term test: is this coupé-cum-SUV a segment too far?](#)
- 5 ['Self-aware' car launched at CES 2019](#)

Subscribe now for unlimited access to our Premium articles

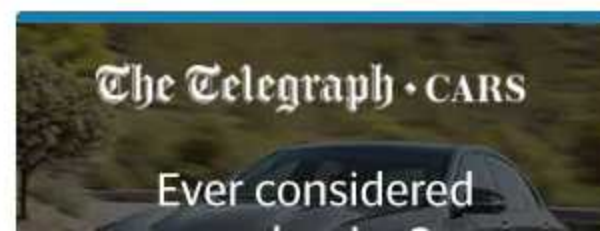
All Digital Access  
Free for 30 days, then £3 per week

[Start free trial](#)

[Want to learn more? View all subscriptions](#)

## FOLLOW THE TELEGRAPH

- [Follow on Twitter](#)
- [Follow on Facebook](#)
- [Follow on Instagram](#)
- [Follow on Pinterest](#)





The Continental GT wasn't designed for this type of road. It soon becomes an object lesson in how to reverse a £160,000 car in a narrow space, as tractors and tourists confront us around every blind bend.

On we go, past the chapel at Capel-y-finn, removed from the outside world by the surrounding ring of mountains. This is where Wordsworth enjoyed one of his favourite walks, novelist Bruce Chatwin found inspiration and Norman warlord William de Lacy hung up his sword and became a hermit (later founding the abbey).

The hedgerows disappear as Gospel Pass climbs to moorland and reveals a spectacular view north from Hay Bluff. It stretches past the "titter-ye-not" mountain of Lord Hereford's Knob – immortalised in a song of the same name by rock band Half Man Half Biscuit. Sir George would be spinning in his grave.

Here the road narrows again, twisting down to the tourist honey pot of Hay-on-Wye. These days there are as many delis and cafes as book shops in the festival town. Between the sustainable fairtrade store and a gallery "geospace" dedicated to love and light, Hay is an emporium of the eclectic.



The beautiful, meandering River Wye forms the England/Wales border for part of its course CREDIT: ADRIAN MOSS/ALAMY

## MORE STORIES

- 1 [Hydrogen fuel cell trains to run on British railways from 2022](#)
- 2 [We join the Liège-Brescia-Liège classic road rally](#)
- 3 [Hyundai i20 review: an underrated supermini with surprising sparkle](#)
- 4 [BMW X4 on long-term test: is this coupé-cum-SUV a segment too far?](#)
- 5 ['Self-aware' car launched at CES 2019](#)

Subscribe now for unlimited access to our Premium articles

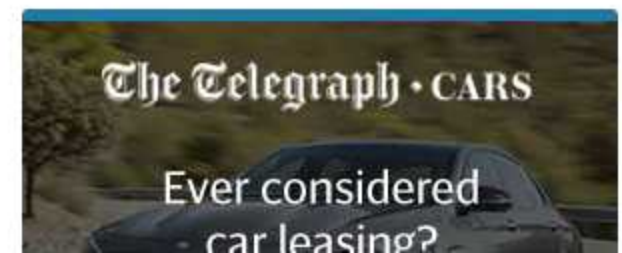
All Digital Access  
Free for 30 days, then £3 per week

Start free trial

Want to learn more? [View all subscriptions](#)

## FOLLOW THE TELEGRAPH

-  [Follow on Twitter](#)
-  [Follow on Facebook](#)
-  [Follow on Instagram](#)
-  [Follow on Pinterest](#)





The Continental GT is patrolling the meandering English-Welsh border, which at this juncture follows the course of the River Wye. To cross it requires a £1 coin and squeezing over the wooden-decked Whitney-on-Wye bridge. You don't have to be in a 2.5 ton Bentley to wonder if the structure will manage the weight of a car.

Nestled in the rolling Welsh Hills beyond is Alchemy Hill, a 17th century farmhouse transformed into a luxury holiday home. Pumped up with soft furnishings and tasteful décor, it offers vast views back towards Hay Bluff. If you can haul yourself away from the log-fired hot tub, there are walks via a secret back gate straight on to Offa's Dyke path and a hilltop wilderness of common land beyond.

The only disturbance in the morning is the sound of riotous birdsong and bleating sheep. The farmhouse is just five miles from Hay but allow extra time for tractors and cyclists. Once tucked up beside a wood fire here, you may decide to stay put instead.

Long before American cowboys moved their cattle over the prairies, medieval drovers passed by this remote spot. They moved sheep and other animals from the upland grazing of Wales to the fattening pastures and markets of the Midlands.



Offa's Dyke path lies at the rear of the luxury cottage at Alchemy Hill CREDIT: JESSICA SAUNDERS

## MORE STORIES

- 1 Hydrogen fuel cell trains to run on British railways from 2022
- 2 We join the Liège-Brescia-Liège classic road rally
- 3 Hyundai i20 review: an underrated supermini with surprising sparkle
- 4 BMW X4 on long-term test: is this coupé-cum-SUV a segment too far?
- 5 'Self-aware' car launched at CES 2019

Subscribe now for unlimited access to our Premium articles

All Digital Access  
Free for 30 days, then £3 per week

Start free trial

Want to learn more? [View all subscriptions](#)

## FOLLOW THE TELEGRAPH

- [Follow on Twitter](#) [Follow on Facebook](#)  
[Follow on Instagram](#) [Follow on Pinterest](#)

The Telegraph • CARS

Ever considered  
car leasing?



This long distance movement of cattle was an arduous task and often followed ancient byways and drover's paths. The routes are still cut in the landscape around Alchemy Hill and the nearby villages of Newchurch and Rhosgoch.

You can explore some of them on horseback at Bryngwyn Riding School, otherwise a decent Ordnance Survey map is essential. Canoe tours of the River Wye are plentiful around Glasbury, it takes four days to paddle and camp the 100 miles down river to Chepstow.

Kington is just a few miles north of Alchemy Hill, a market town snuggled in the duvet of undulating hills. A tiny museum provides an historical overview, including the bones of the Kington elephant, a circus animal that died en route to a local performance in the 1930s.



## 2018 Bentley Continental GT - in pictures

[View Gallery](#)

Rather more touchy-feely is the Small Breeds Farm Park and Owl Centre, a lovable collection of miniature, rare and friendly creatures in an idyllic hillside setting. Time your visit to coincide with the feeding schedule.

### MORE STORIES

- 1 [Hydrogen fuel cell trains to run on British railways from 2022](#)
- 2 [We join the Liège-Brescia-Liège classic road rally](#)
- 3 [Hyundai i20 review: an underrated supermini with surprising sparkle](#)
- 4 [BMW X4 on long-term test: is this coupé-cum-SUV a segment too far?](#)
- 5 ['Self-aware' car launched at CES 2019](#)

Subscribe now for unlimited access to our Premium articles

All Digital Access  
Free for 30 days, then £3 per week

[Start free trial](#)

Want to learn more? [View all subscriptions](#)

### FOLLOW THE TELEGRAPH

- [Follow on Twitter](#) [Follow on Facebook](#)  
[Follow on Instagram](#) [Follow on Pinterest](#)

The Telegraph • CARS

Sir George ended his days in London and was buried near Brighton. There are plenty of mountains he could have explored around here but the man with the map was obviously destined for greater things.

*[uniquehomestays.com](http://uniquehomestays.com) (Alchemy Hill); [owlcentre.com](http://owlcentre.com)*

## THE FACTS

Bentley Continental GT

PRICE £159,100

ENGINE 5,950cc twin-turbo W12

POWER 626bhp

TOP SPEED 207mph

ACCELERATION 0-62mph in 3.6sec

FUEL ECONOMY 23.2mpg (EU Combined)

For tips and advice, [visit our Advice section](#), or sign up to our newsletter [here](#)

[A-Z Car Finder](#)

[Follow on Twitter](#) [Follow on Facebook](#)  
[Follow on Instagram](#) [Follow on Pinterest](#)



The Telegraph • CARS

Ever considered car leasing?

Discover more

Brought to you by **SELECT CAR LEASING**



The Telegraph • GARAGE

Brought to you by **motoreasy.com**

See how much you can save at The Telegraph Garage.

Pick a product