



At 169 luxurious miles per hour, the Bentayga Diesel is the world's fastest SUV – and our Gina Baksa put it through its paces in the Italian Tirol

**W**E'RE AT Innsbruck Airport, waiting to helicopter over to the fabulous San Luis resort in the Italian Sud Tirol before the next day's Bentayga test drive. But the gods have other plans, and fog over the city's Nordkette mountains means a no-fly.

However, it does mean we can start our six-litre engines a whole day earlier.

The route? A two-hour drive across the Brenner Pass down into Italy via Bozen, then snaking up past Bolzano to San Luis at Haferling.

It's a superb mix of motorway and mountain roads for testing Bentley's first diesel – and the chance to enjoy the Bentayga's explosive 12 cylinders, 600hp and eight-speed transmission.

The Bentayga first came to market in September 2016 and has sold well across all territories.

In fact, Bentley is on a ride, with a total of 11,023 cars (all models) sold last year across the world. Externally, this

# Gently in a Bentley

chunky luxury SUV may lack the sporty sexiness of the GT Continental but she's unmistakably a Bentley: large dark grille, four round headlamps in a V silhouette, a Bentley badge and the V8 twin exhaust in an 8-shape.

The Bentayga has a boxy yet athletic look with her long bonnet, shorter front overhang and a longer rear haunch. The deep body with a shallower window gives her a look of solidity while the sunroof extends the full length of the top, giving a streamlined silhouette. Inside the cabin, attention to detail

and Bentley's world-renowned craftsmanship is all here: leather hand-stitched seats, wooden veneers, metal inserts, oval air vents with pull-stop controls, and the Breitling analogue clock that makes me feel like I'm about to announce "chicks away!".

The all-new eight-inch central touchscreen has all the bells and whistles you could ever need: a new navigation system with 3D display, a massive hard drive for storing music, and even an optional digital TV. Connectivity is key with new-

generation Bentleys so, thanks to Bluetooth, her 4G phone module and on-board wi-fi hotspot, you'll never lose touch.

The rear seats can also have optional entertainment tablets (Android) – useful for keeping the children happy on longer journeys.

With a top speed of 169 mph, the Bentayga is officially the world's fastest SUV.

She also has a superb range of about 1,000km (621 miles) – a marked increase on 12-cylinder models that might get you 350 miles to a tank.

No pesky refuelling for us with our monster 85-litre tank!

Much more grand tourer than your average SUV, we had sufficient gas to get us to Barcelona if we'd so desired.

The Austrian and Italian motorways proved a solid testing ground for the Bentayga's responsive acceleration, braking and safety features.

Thanks to her responsive acceleration of 0 to 60 mph









SEEING SOMETHING NEW.

*The Courtyard at Rosewood London, steps away from Covent Garden*

A SENSE OF PLACE. A SENSE OF DISCOVERY.

+44 20 7781 8888 | [london.reservations@rosewoodhotels.com](mailto:london.reservations@rosewoodhotels.com) | [rosewoodhotels.com](http://rosewoodhotels.com)

ROSEWOOD  
LONDON

in 4.6 seconds, I avoided near-death experiences via fatigued truck drivers veering without warning into our lane.

Safety measures like the orange warning lights on the wing mirrors were also very welcome.

Fully responsive brakes managed to reign in the 3.25 tonnes of sexy steel and aluminium with ease when other drivers failed to indicate before changing lanes. Safety first with the Bentayga.

The power assisted steering is responsive and light yet dependable, and has a generous 12.4 m (40.6 ft) turning circle, which was to prove especially welcome the following day.

Driving is quiet and cocoon-like; it's all too easy to step on the gas and collect a speeding ticket.

The Bentayga is automatic but, if you want more engagement, the paddle shifts are set behind the steering wheel.

Eight ride-levels are available via buttons on the console and you have the choice of four ride-heights, from motorway to extreme off-road.

The heated leather seats are supportive and sexy to the touch, with the stitching only appearing on the bolsters and headrests, leaving a smoother support for one's derriere.

As we turned off the motorway and began to climb the vertiginous and windy mountain roads to Haferling, the Bentayga performed like a dream.

Fast cornering felt safe, responsive and secure thanks to the 48v electric active anti-roll system, while the suspension absorbed the bumps well.

In any other car I would have felt exhausted by then; in the Bentayga, I remained focused and energised. Sheer driving pleasure...

We arrived at San Luis just as dusk was falling.

Cloud and fog had meant we missed the stupendous mountain views, but the resort at night was enchanting.

A 40-acre haven of 39 wooden chalets and 17 tree-houses surround a now-frozen lake.

At its centrepiece, the massive chalet housing the open-plan reception area, shop, restaurant and lounges.

It's run by Alex and Claudia Meister, the fourth generation of the hotelier family which also owns the Hotel Irma in nearby Merano.

As we later discover, the wood used in the buildings is mainly antique, sourced from the derelict barns of local farmers.

My own treehouse is perched on solid giant stilts at the edge of the forest. It's a haven of peace with stunning views across the valley.

A roaring fire and sparkling wine from the nearby Manincor estate was a welcome aperitif before an excellent dinner with the charming vineyard



owners Count Michael Goëss-Enzenberg and his lovely wife, the Countess Sophie.

The aesthetics of San Luis complement the striking interiors of the new Bentley Diesel Bentayga and I have the good fortune to sit next to Darren Day at dinner.

He's head of Design Studio 1 at Crewe and explains the inspiration for the Bentayga's outstanding interior: British craftsmanship and attention to detail at its best.

The dashboard is inspired by the winged Bentley logo, he tells us, while the seats were influenced by hunting jackets and sportswear.

"You'll notice that the quilting only appears on the top of the seats and on the bolsters," he says. "The body of the seats are smooth, making them more comfortable, and making the seat's heating, massage and cooling functions work better, too."

"We wanted our customers to feel just

as at home being chauffeured in the city as driving themselves on a rough off-road course.

"All the design work is done with Biro and pencil and later some computer work.

"We develop the designs in clay, which gives the whole project a human feel.

"The team then take the clay model, transfer it to CAD and then we manufacture parts of the car.

"We also use digital data to make animations."

As with all Bentleys, there's a high level of personalisation available, from the choice of hides (15 standard) and paint colours, to a special Breitling-by-Bentley self-winding tourbillon clock at about £150,000, making it "the most expensive watch winder in the world".

"The Bentayga's cabin design allows the wood to flow from the dashboard and wrap itself into the door space, with accents to the liquid amber veneer







created by metal inserts,” says Darren. “We can now offer clients a special colour split on the V8 with Beluga black leather and colour inserts on the seats. “And we now offer a more affordable Breitling clock,” he smiles.

From initial project brief to the start of manufacturing, the Bentayga was 48 months in the design studio.

Perfect for picnics and polo, I love the leather-trimmed folding seat at the rear that turns the tailgate into a viewing platform.

Mulliner recently announced front and rear seats in different hides and colourways, plus duotone exterior paintwork.

The options are endless if you have the cash. You can even have a Linley Hamper, complete with refrigerator, bespoke fine Linley china cutlery, crockery and crystal glass, and a storage area for dry goods.

After the best night’s sleep in my treehouse eyrie, we made our way after a sumptuous breakfast to the Manincor vineyards at Caldaro, South of Bolzano.

The methods here are completely biodynamic – as evidenced in the flavours the previous evening where we sampled the Rosé, the Moscato, the Réserve Della Contessa and the Mason and Le Petit – all delicious on the palate and very refined.

The Count has created an underground winery that uses gravity feeds instead of pumps.

And classical music is piped in as the precious liquid settles in pure oak casks.

Camomile tea is also fed to the young vines to keep them calm, and crystals and copper are sprayed on to the leaves. Genius!

His mantra – “No birds, no bees, no flowers, no trees” is thought-provoking (you can buy honey here, too).

“And we will never use aluminium,” he adds. “The wine must be able to breathe.”

The care and love that goes into the cultivation, picking and making of this beautiful wine has produced exemplary results.

Small wonder that their logo is Man In Cor (literally, “hand on heart”).

There was no tasting here since we needed our faculties for the mountain drive to lunch at Pretzhof restaurant.

Before us lay ice, snow and almost zero visibility. Challenging conditions resulted in a few wrong turns, resulting in a hair-raising three-point turn on a narrow mountain road.

Yet despite its size, the Bentayga handled the manoeuvre with ease and I received admiring looks from a bemused farmer who clearly thought I wouldn’t make good my escape.

The Bentayga Diesel SUV can arguably tackle any terrain and any



weather conditions, safely and securely.

I felt completely in control during the tough drive to the top of the Jaufenpass.

In any other vehicle I would have been nervous; but cocooned in the warmth and comfort of the Bentayga, not only did I feel safe, I knew I had a vehicle

cheeses, sausages, salamis, aged steaks, rich goulash soup and a platter of home-made raviolis with cheeses.

The Mair family have owned Pretzhof for 33 years and told us that they never use chemicals or hormones in their produce.

As we made our slow descent on our way back to Innsbruck, I contemplated the undoubted appeal of the Bentayga and was sad to see her go.

Luxurious yet eminently practical, this beast of an SUV is an elegant and rugged beauty.

Handling, precision, suspension and performance is superb.

At £162,700 before you add your extras, the Bentayga is a cool luxury statement car for singles as well as an ideal family luxury SUV – perfect for long journeys as well as the school run.

From the streets of Mayfair to the deserts of Morocco, the Bentley is a well-honed and well-crafted machine that will satisfy the discerning driver who appreciates its balance of purity and form, and fine tailored detailing.

The fastest SUV in the world is quite simply gorgeous.

[bentleymotors.com](http://bentleymotors.com)

“  
Perfect for picnics  
and polo, I love the  
leather-trimmed folding  
seat at the rear that  
turns the tailgate into a  
viewing platform  
”

with the guts and the engineering for the job.

Our lunch at the rustic Pretzhof provided welcome nourishment against the Winter cold: a warm welcome from patron Herr Mair, and a plentiful supply of delicious local charcuterie and

