

# 1959 BENTLEY S1 SALOON



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The Bentley S1 Saloon mixes technical innovation and stalwart tradition. It has become an icon for old money and refined tastes.



## WHERE DOES THE 1959 S1 FIT IN?

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1959 was the last year for the first series of the S model Bentley Saloon, which had replaced the R-model series in 1955. The S model continued through the S2 series (1959-62) and the S3 series (1962-65). The S model was replaced by the T model 1965.

Except for minor cosmetic differences, the S1 Bentley was identical with the Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud I. In addition to the S1 Saloon, Bentley produced chassis for two main variants: The 2-door Continental and a longer-wheelbase version for limousines.

## THE CAR SHOWN HERE

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At the time of these photographs, this 1959 Bentley S1 was part of the collection of Leonard Johnson in Colorado. Though the body and interior were original Bentley, the original 4.9 liter, in-line 6-cylinder engine had been replaced with a V8 from a late-model Cadillac.

## WHAT SETS THIS CAR APART?

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Nothing looks like a Bentley S1 Saloon ... except, of course, a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud 1, which looks almost exactly the same, the only differences being the radiator grill and badging—that's it!



For such a massive car, the S1 Bentley displays a nimble profile with flowing lines that make it look long, low, and aerodynamic.

Though the S1 looks luscious standing still, the British automobile magazine *The Motor* coaxed a top speed of 103 miles per hour (166 km/hr) in the day. Maybe the flowing lines are aerodynamic after all.



The distinctive waterfall grill dominates the front. The Bentley's wide stance is emphasized by headlights mounted inboard of the fenders.



This particular example sports a pearlescent white exterior that loves the subtle tones of late afternoon.



The front corners are remarkably clear of gew-gaw: just headlights, turn signals, and forward-mounted wing mirrors.



The look down the long hood was designed to impress drivers, passengers, and onlookers. And it does all of that! The hood ornament provides a visual reference, handy when trying to park.



Bentley's winged B makes doubly sure you know what brand of vehicle you have encountered.

## 1959 Bentley SI Saloon



The design of the back is as simple and elegant as possible. An owner, along the way, added the phrase "Sorry, No Gray Poupon" in reference to a TV ad where the passenger of one limo asks another if he can borrow some mustard.



The interior has the ambiance of a Victorian gentlemen's club with wall-to-wall walnut.



Real wood, analog gauges, and old-fashioned knobs remind us what century spawned this car.



Yes, that is what real burl wood looks like.



Hmmm, I'm not sure this is a standard Bentley gear-shift lever.

A performance car? Definitely not. A luxury car? Not by today's standards. A prestige car? Oh yeah!

## FACTS AND FIGURES

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<b>Make and model</b>	1959 Bentley S Saloon (Series 1 or S1)
<b>Sequence</b>	The S1 followed the R series and was followed by the S2, S3, and T series.
<b>Manufacturer</b>	Bentley Motors Ltd., Crew, Cheshire, England
<b>Body style</b>	4-door saloon
<b>Body</b>	Pressed steel and light alloy with stressed skin. Aluminum for doors, hood, and trunk lid.

<b>Frame</b>	Box section with all joints welded
<b>Length</b>	212.4 in (5.395 m)
<b>Width</b>	74.5 in (1.892 m)
<b>Height</b>	64.25 in (1.631 m)
<b>Wheelbase</b>	123 in (3.124 m)
<b>Track (front/rear)</b>	58/60 in (1.473/1.524 m)
<b>Drive</b>	2-wheel, rear
<b>Acceleration</b>	0-60 mph (0-97 km/hr) in 13.1 sec.
<b>Top speed</b>	103 mph (166 km/h)
<b>Turning circle</b>	41 ft 8 in (12.7 m)
<b>Curb weight</b>	4242 lbs. (2032 kg)
<b>Engine maker</b>	Bentley (replaced with Cadillac)
<b>Engine type</b>	Original: Inline, overhead push-rod 6-cylinder with twin SU HD 8 carburetors. Replacement: V8
<b>Engine size.</b>	Original: 298 cubic inches (4.887 L)
<b>Fuel type</b>	Gasoline
<b>Fuel consumption</b>	13.4 mpg (0.175 l/km)
<b>Steering</b>	Left-hand drive, manual, cam and roller. 18-inch steering wheel.
<b>Number made</b>	3538 (1955-1959)
<b>Front suspension</b>	Independent with coil springs, double-acting hydraulic dampers, and torsion-rod stabilizer
<b>Rear suspension</b>	Semi-elliptic leaf springs with electrically controlled hydraulic dampers
<b>Brakes</b>	Servo-assisted hydrostatic with hydraulic operation on the front and hydraulic and mechanical in the rear
<b>Wheels</b>	15 x 6 in. (381 x 152 mm), bolted-on, pressed steel with hub caps
<b>Tires</b>	8.20 x 15 in. (208 x 381 mm)
<b>Gauges</b>	Speedometer, tachometer, oil pressure, water temperature, clock



## THINKING OF BUYING ONE?

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By today's standards, a S1 Bentley is big, heavy, and not exceptionally luxurious. Check out a mid-range Hyundai for comparison. But nothing beats the snob value of one of these venerable British behemoths. A Hemi 'Cuda says, "I can beat you to the next stop light." A Porsche says, "I can run circles around you." This Bentley says, "I own the stop lights and the circle too."

Prices vary considerably depending on the condition and running order, ranging from US\$20,000 for a tired driver to US\$100,000 for a show winner.

Before you seal the deal, check all over for rust, especially in the floor panels, rocker panels, and fender wells. Also check for the original tools and manuals that came with the car.

## WANT PHOTOS?

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