

Let's Do The *Twist*

Vespa's twist-and-go scooter comes with

dollops of classic style and modern engineering, but at a premium

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IT'S TIME YOU RUMMAGED through your parents' closet and pulled out those old 1960s Wayfarers, skin-fit denims and fancy moccasins. They're back in fashion, in time for Vespa's second coming to India. After more than 60 years of existence, Vespa has moved on to become a cult internationally. It's more a style statement than a commuter. Pretty much like Volkswagen's Beetle or the Mini Cooper among cars. Even the company prefers to

NEED TO KNOW

Engine	125-cc
Max power	10.06PS @7,500rpm
Max torque	10.60Nm @6,000rpm
Transmission	CVT
Tyre	90/100 10 53J
Fuel tank	8 litres
Price	Rs 60,000 estimated



position itself as a lifestyle brand than a two-wheeler maker.

This time round, the Italian company is venturing solo, owned cent per cent by parent company, Piaggio. They propose to set up 35 dealerships across the country and have introduced more brands that they own, such as the Aprilia, and who knows, even Moto Guzzi might follow.

Vespa's first product in India is the LX 125, which was unveiled at the Auto Expo earlier this year, and it does evoke a fair amount of nostalgia with its retro design. It has the cool style quotient of an original Vespa, but now in a modern and more reliable avatar. You can't miss the classic theme in the curvy design,

chrome elements, foot-board rubber strips and three stroke alloy wheels. It is compact in size, comes in a range of adorable, bold colours like red, yellow, black and white and has a great mix of the past and present.

But if you are looking for a no-nonsense practical commuter, then you had better pick one of the run-of-the-mill products, for this Vespa never intends to be one. It's a fashion scooter. Take the seat, for example. It is flat, wide and squab, just about enough to fit two average Indians. Even the chrome-finish pillion grab-rails are more a matter of style than practical utility. The integrated rear foot-pegs are of little use as the pillion has to keep his feet in a bow-legged position. Yes, there are

practical bits like decent under-seat storage, which can contain a shopping bag or an open-face helmet. Even the plastic container can be removed to gain quick access to the engine. There's also a lockable cubbyhole in the leg shield. The neatly designed instrument cluster has a fuel-gauge and a digital clock/calendar for your convenience.

This twist-and-go scooter has a four-stroke 125-cc motor with three valves for better breathing, a first in this segment. No, it does not have fuel injection and sports the conventional carburettor with a claimed fuel efficiency of 60 kpl under test conditions, which would translate to about 40-45 kpl in real world. The LX 125's large eight-litre fuel

tank will make sure that your trips to the petrol pump are infrequent. The motor produces 10.06 PS of maximum power and 10.60 Nm of torque, which is a couple of notches more than other 125-cc scooters available in the country. Wrench the throttle and the Vespa surges forward smoothly and without fuss until about 40 km/h. The exhaust note is throaty, though power is not delivered that urgently and there are huffs and puffs to maintain higher speed on open roads. This seems all right for a Sunday ride. The brakes feel spongy and hesitate to bring the scooter to standstill.

The monocoque steel construction keeps Vespa's steel body tradition alive and, at the same time, offers greater rigidity and durability.

The single sided trailing arm in the front and coil spring shock-absorber in the rear are on the firmer side. You feel it over pronounced bumps, but overall the scooter is well-balanced, handles surprisingly well and even has a good turning circle. You can spend the entire day trotting around town on it comfortably.

It all boils down to the price now. Vespa had not announced the price officially till we went to press, but our guess is that it will be placed in the Rs 60,000 price bracket, which is a fair bit of cash for a 125-cc scooter. But then the buying decision for a lifestyle product like this is driven more by the heart than the brain. You don't really need it, but definitely want one. **Bikes**

1 The stylish instrument cluster also has a fuel gauge and a digital clock / calendar

2 The under seat storage can contain an open face helmet. It can be removed easily to give quick access to the engine

3 The footboard rubber strips are a prominent Vespa design. The pillion's feet remain in an awkward position on the integrated rear foot rests.