

Love is a Vespa...with a silver tail



Robin Sharrock and his personalised red Vespa. (Image: R. Sharrock)

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[/dropcap]s it a love of Italian style or a desire to be different that is driving a Vespa revival in the south-west? We speak to Warrnambool photographer **ROBIN SHARROCK**, who has had three Vespas, paired with five helmets and two foxtails, about the attraction:

So, for a scooterist, it is a scooter or nothing?

That's right. If I didn't have a scooter, I wouldn't have a

motorbike. They are entirely different experiences and I am not into motorbikes. A push bike maybe...

How did you get the Vespa bug?

I first saw Vespas during a trip to Paris many years ago and everyone was zipping around on them. I thought they looked good, they are a cost efficient way of getting around and they are quite safe.

You have since owned three Vespas?

Yes. I started with a green 150cc in 2008 and then I moved up to a 250cc that was a rare, orange colour. I found that one on the Internet and had it shipped down from Sydney. Unfortunately that was a write-off after I was hit: like all bike riders, I have had many, many close calls, but only one hit, thank goodness. After that, in 2010 I bought my current one, which is a red 250cc. Between them, I have done about 35,000km...but the red one, being red, is definitely the fastest!



On the road: Robin has taken his Vespa as far

as Hobart, Tasmania..via the ferry, of course! (Image: R. Sharrock)

What is it about the Vespa scooter, in particular, that is so appealing?

It is an iconic Italian work of art. They were designed in 1946 as a step-through bike that women could ride easily, but now of course everyone rides them and they are part of a huge scene right around the world. You start with the classic scooter and then you can customise it to suit your taste, so that it reflects a bit of your personality. It becomes a passion.

[box type="download"] Vespa is Italian for wasp, which is similar to the sound made by the early Vespa's. The Vespa was patented by Piaggio and Co., who originally made locomotives, carriages and aircraft. After Audrey Hepburn side-saddled with Gregory Peck on a Vespa in the 1952 movie Roman Holiday, sales increased by 100,000! If you would like a new Vespa, expect to spend around \$8000-9000. [/box]

How have you customised your Vespa?

Well, I have two foxtails. One is your regular foxtail that I got from a guy who was selling them in Hahndorf (South Australia). It looks good and its good for safety. And I also have an Arctic fox tail that came off a fur coat. I was in an op-shop in Lorne – we had gone for a ride there – and I was asking if they had any fox tails and a woman told me she had one, from her mother's fur coat which she had bought in Canada. Her mother had removed the fur trim from around the neck, so I bought it from her for \$25. It is very special, so it only comes out for special occasions.



The authentic Arctic foxtail
recycled from a fur coat.
(Image: R. Sharrock)

Do you dress for the Vespa?

On long rides I have all the safety gear, but on shorter rides, yes, I might pick out some shoes, or a coat and a scarf is always a must. I also have five helmets and I choose one that suits my mood for the day, so yes, it is a fashion thing.

And are there days when you don't ride the Vespa? After all, south-west Victoria can be a windy place!

I like to ride every day, unless it is teeming with rain. I have a tall screen at the front for added protection from the wind, rain, stones, bugs...so that helps. You sometimes get pushed around a bit, but it has 145kg on the ground, so it holds its own pretty well. I plan to ride until I am too old and can't ride anymore.

- Robin Sharrock has been a photographer in Warrnambool for 28 years, including as a senior 'snapper' with the local newspaper before turning freelance in 1999. He is also an amateur astronomer and plays bass guitar, banjo and upright bass...but not all at once.

[box] * Warrnambool has a scooter club, Vespa+, that meets regularly for coffee and conversation. You can ride any make of scooter to be a member. Call Robin on 0409 215 613 or email him at robinsharrock@hotmail.net.au for details.[/box]



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