

Piaggio Zip 50 - Review - Zip-a-dee-doodah!



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March 6, 2008 - [PRLog](#) -- When you're used to riding bigger motorcycles or scooters, hopping onto a 50 comes as something of a shock. From when cars race off in front of you from the lights, to having a B-double sitting just off your rear wheel in a 60km/h zone, riding a moped, if anything, makes you a whole lot more aware of your surroundings.

Okay, lack of speed, acceleration and road presence is the bad side, but there's a whole lot to the good side of mopeds too, and the fact the latter outweighs the former is seeing people flock to mopeds and scooters in general in ever-greater numbers.

Heading up the good side of the ledger is convenience and cost. The Piaggio Zip 50 we're looking at here costs just \$1990 plus ORC, and those on road costs are not likely to break the bank no matter where you live in Australia. Then there's the fact they're cheap to insure, they run on a whiff of unleaded and because they're so light and underpowered your tyres, brakes and consumable should last for ages too.

They're small enough to fit through the tiniest of gaps in traffic, and they can be tucked away easily in the corner of a garage or garden shed. And if you live in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia or the Northern Territory, you can still ride a moped on an ordinary car licence. With petrol prices flying high, it's no wonder more and more people are discovering the joys of economic commuting they bring.

But because you can ride a moped on a car licence in selected states, the Piaggio mopeds that reach our shores are restricted to 50km/h, because in most if not all cases it's simply not cost effective for the manufacturer to produce two versions of the same model. That means that if you live outside of the above four states, you're well within your rights to de-restrict your moped, and unleash an extra bit of go – and let's face it, at this end of the scale every bit helps!

The Zip 50 is cheap to buy, and so don't expect the all-round finish of, say, a bigger style machine like a Vespa. Most noticeable on this model was the dial on the instruments that looked like it had been set aside for a clock, until its designers realised they'd run out of money for the hands...

In short, this is a bare bones type of scoot. There's a speedo, an odometer and the four usual idiot lights (turn, high beam, oil and – thankfully – petrol). But the bodywork fits together well and looks attractive enough, and it's still got those important things like a centrestand, a steering lock and decent underseat

storage (enough to fit a full face helmet – if you give it a bit of a shove!). Perhaps most important of all, is the fact it has a good horn.

On the road its performance is what you'd expect of a restricted 50. The Zip wasn't too fond of being ridden when cold (it's carbureted), so I'd recommend letting it warm a little before heading out on the road – otherwise when you wind on the throttle it simply bogs down.

I found that despite being restricted (in this case, through its ignition coil), the Zip would manage an indicated 60km/h – eventually. Realistically this means that outside of busy city streets, the Zip is starting to stray into dangerous territory. At least you're never likely to get a speeding ticket.

But it handles well – with a claimed dry weight of just 84kg it'll turn in the blink of an eye, while it's roomy enough even for my lanky 185cm self and it's got a really good set of brakes.

My only gripes with this model, and they're not big ones at all, concern the fact that you can't leave the seat up with the steering lock on (the left handlebar is in the way), and that when you're washing the thing it's easy to get water into the underseat storage bin, which doesn't drain. Oh, and it's easy to overfill the petrol tank too. I got an impressive average fuel economy of 28km/lt, which given its 7.5lt tank provides an effective range of close to 200km.

I enjoyed getting around on the zip. It's a 'does what it says on the tin' kind of a thing, but it does it well. If you normally drive a car and you're looking to cut both your commuting costs and time, getting a Zip 50 is a good place to start.

Piaggio Zip 50

Engine: 49.3cc, air-cooled, four-stroke, four-valve single-cylinder

Fuel system: carburettor

Power: N/A

Torque: N/A

Transmission: CVT automatic

Frame: tubular steel spine

Front brake: Single 175mm disc with twin-piston caliper

Rear brake: Single 100mm drum

Seat height: 735mm

Wheelbase: 1250mm

Claimed dry weight: 84kg

Fuel tank: 7.5L

Price: \$1990 plus ORC

Colours: silver, red, blue or black

Warranty: 24 months/unlimited kilometres

Contact: (03) 9381 9720

Web: www.piaggio.com.au

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