

# Scooter owners revolt over ban in Vespa birthplace

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Scooter owners are up in arms in Genoa, birthplace of the iconic Vespa, after the Italian city's mayor banned models produced before 1999 in a bid to tackle pollution.

The hashtag #handsoffmyvespa went viral on [social media](#), with furious riders in the northwest coastal city—which boasts more motorcycles per capita than any other Italian city—taking up the slogan: "Born in Genoa, dies in Genoa".

Mayor Marco Doria signed off in December on an anti-smog initiative due to come into force in February, which would have stranded close to 20,000 riders of the two-wheeler, whose name in Italian means "wasp."

But the measure banning their use in large areas of the city centre between 7am and 7pm has sparked such a backlash it has been suspended until April to give people time to organise alternative transport—and may yet be scrapped.

"This really shouldn't be happening," Vittorio Vernazzano of the Vespa Club Genova told *Corriere della Sera* daily.

"Especially not in 2016, the 70th anniversary of the birth of the Vespa, and in Genoa, where it was produced in 1946 by a Genovese entrepreneur, Enrico Piaggio."

The city has fewer cars than any other in Italy—apart from Venice,

where the main mode of transport is boat or gondola—and pro-Vespa campaigners say the public transport services are poor.

But environment assessor Italo Porcile is determined not to give in to the pressure.

"I love the Vespino, I used to have one myself," he said. "But the 'Euro 0' (a model produced before 1999) pollutes terribly and public health is more important".

Piaggio, which started off producing locomotives and then fighter planes, came up with the Vespa after the Second World War, when the country's roads, severely damaged by bombing, were crying out for an alternative to cars for the masses.

With its distinctive pressed steel frame, the Vespa was made famous outside Italy by the 1953 film "Roman Holiday," starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck, who use it to take a wild ride around the Eternal City.

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