


CLASSIC DRIVER



1954 Piaggio Ape - Calessino

Calessino

Scottsdale, 22 January

Lot sold	USD 0	Condition	Used
Year of manufacture	1954	Location	
		Motorcycle type	Street
		Colour	Other

Description

- An ingenious, iconic post-war Italian workhorse; mechanically similar to the celebrated Vespa scooter
- Desirably equipped with 150-cc engine; cable-operated gear change
- Green metallic with masonite passenger compartment; cloth top
- Nicely presented example of the rare "buggy" style

Less intimidating than a traditional motorcycle, Piaggio's famous Vespa (Italian for "Wasp") made personal mobility attainable for millions following its introduction in 1946. Yet in the years following World War II, Italian manufacturers displayed a remarkable ability to create vehicles to suit nearly any conceivable need from a given selection of components. In this regard, Piaggio was no different.

Introduced two years after the Vespa scooter, Piaggio's Ape (fittingly, Italian for "Bee") was created to tote goods and people. The Ape could be configured to meet a wide range of commercial needs thanks to its extremely flexible tricycle configuration, allowing it to serve as a miniature truck, van, or buggy. At its core, however, the Ape was very similar to its two-wheeled counterpart; Piaggio had cleverly repurposed proven Vespa mechanics to create what would become an immensely successful workhorse.

The Ape Calessino variant, like this rare 1954 model, was effectively a motorized rickshaw with bench seating beneath a retractable cloth canopy. Here, the wood and masonite body pairs nicely with the green metallic paint, lending flair to what might have otherwise been humble transportation.

Restored in the past to factory specification and now showing the patina of careful use, this example

also benefits from a 150-cc engine, which first became available in 1952, and an upgraded cable-operated gear change.

While the basics have remained the same over the years, the Ape—which, like the Vespa, is still in production, including in people-hauling Calessino guise—has diverged sharply from its scooter origins, growing larger and gaining creature comforts like an enclosed cabin along the way. Early examples like this are interesting and desirable not only because they have survived decades of hard work (this particular configuration, being partially wood, was even more likely to fall into disrepair), but in how they clearly reveal their shared heritage with the Vespa.

To view this car and others currently consigned to this auction, please visit the RM website at rmsothebys.com/en/auctions/az21.

RM Auctions Ltd



First name Augustin

Last name Sabatie-Garat

39-42 New Bond Street

London

W1S 2SQ

United Kingdom

Phone +1 (519) 352-4575

<https://rmsothebys.com>

<https://www.classicdriver.com/en/bike/piaggio/ape/1954/807740>

© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.