

# Scooter Nova

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# 1900km, 2-up on a 75cc Lambretta Cometa

## from Haparanda (Finland) to Malmö (Sweden)

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Quite some time ago I got an offer to buy a Cometa in Finland. These scooters were never sold in my native Sweden. We only had a special version of the Lui, the Swedish Luna, which was restricted to 1hp and 30 km/h and had a different gearbox, etc. Having several of these slow Luna Lambrettas I decided I wanted a 'full-power' 75cc model.

Time went by and it was difficult to buy this scooter at such a distance. I learned it was registered as a historical (museum) vehicle and was still fitted with its original tyre up front. The rear, it seems, had been replaced at some time.

### The Deal & The Idea

More recently I stumbled upon a barn-find Series 2 Lambretta that my garage mate really liked, so I decided for a three way deal. He would finance the Cometa in Finland and in return get the Series 2. Now I had to get the Cometa home and looking at the transport options it looked like it would end up being quite expensive. But while at work one day, the conundrum nudging constantly at the back of my mind, yet another silly idea emerged... Why not ride it home?

I asked my wife Janne if she wanted to join me and to my biggest surprise she almost instantly said yes. She always wanted to see the north of Sweden it seemed!

### Rebuild Kit

I started planning the trip, what things I would need and what I wanted to replace on the scooter before riding it home. This is a 1960s 75cc Lambretta still with at least one original tyre. Who knows when it was last started up, never mind ridden anywhere. Ignition system was top of my mind to power the GPS. That, a battery powered timing light, an impact wrench for the flywheel nut, new tyres, cables, tubes, gasket set, seals, bearing, extra cylinder kit, beefed up rear shock absorber with adjustable preload etc...

To save space we went for hammocks instead of tents to have space for the tools and parts. When finished the first day the intent was to post back a parcel with the stuff I could do without during the trip, having by then replaced the ignition system and tyres.

My intention was to do this adventure on a budget so I reached out to the Swedish scooter scene informing of my intentions and asking for places to stay. To my overwhelming surprise I got a massive response with loads of offers to spend the night and use their tools and workshops. Most of the people I didn't know at all before. Heartwarming indeed.

### Day 0

Traveling by night train Malmö to Haparanda. Switching trains in Stockholm, Umeå, Boden. We had sushi and a bottle of wine on the first train to Stockholm. In Boden, while waiting for the next train we stumbled upon a snow scooter racing on water!

### Day 1 - Work day on the scooter

The plan was to ride the first day, but more work on scooter was required than I was prepared for, so we missed out on the first day of planned riding. We really needed, for personal reasons and the permission to ride on foreign plates in Sweden, to be back on Friday. There was no buffer in the schedule really so a lost day is like pissing in your pants.

We finally arrived at Haparanda train station. Our first sight of the Cometa was at a local grocery store where the seller had dropped it off at a couple of hours before we arrived. He fixed a few hours south on the Finish side of the ocean and we never got to meet him. Also on the same day, the whole day and night is the happening of the year – cruising. Everybody is getting silly drunk and riding around in big oversized American cars. Apparently, we also made the local newspaper in Haparanda who were there to report about the cruising.

We began unpacking tools and working on the Cometa. Replacing tubes, tyres, upgrading to 12V DC ignition to power my GPS. Attaching GPS mounts, doing the wiring and setting ignition timing. I also carried out an oil change. My wife Janne



**Top left:** Unpacking tools and working on our new Cometa before riding it over 1,900km home. **Above:** This photo was taken a little after 23:00 and it is bright as day.

**Left:** With no accommodation available in town, we found somewhere outside the train station to hang our hammocks.

helped out with switching the tyres and tubes. At 23:00 the sun is still up and it is bright as day. The Lambretta is finally somewhat rideable, but I had major issues with the clutch slipping. Wife is even less impressed now than she was at 22:00 when her meal was a fast food takeaway.

Not having booked anything for the first night and with

everything sold out, we found some trees just outside the train station where we put up our hammocks and spent the first night having a proper experience of the midnight sun phenomena.

### Day 2 - Haparanda to Piteå

Terribly anxious about the clutch slip and eager to get going...



**Left:** Arriving finally at Haparanda train station. Haparanda/Torneå is a split city on the border between Sweden and Finland. **Right:** First sight of the Cometa which the seller had dropped off at a local grocery store before we arrived.



**Above left:** Day 2 – cockpit loaded and ready for take off.  
**Middle:** Fantastic people at the local grocery store lending us missing tools and opening up early to help us out in the morning.  
**Left:** First incident, an oil leak between engine block and side casing. Tipping it over to prevent oil escaping. Also checking chain tension while I'm at it. **Above right:** Second small breakdown, a puncture. The tyre got pinched during fitting so having to revert to the original inner tube.

It was a long day and we felt pretty beat up after one night on the noisy shared train cabin and then the night before on the hammocks, we decided to get a room in Piteå and a beer in town.

### Day 3 - Piteå to Örnsköldsvik

A wet day on incredible roads, mountain passes and gravel tracks. That evening we arrived at our host for the night in Örnsköldsvik where we enjoyed a homemade dinner.



**Left:** Switching to some waterproof clothes to provide some rain shield. **Above:** In the middle of nowhere far up north. The stretches of the roads are incredible.  
**Opposite page top:** Typical mountain pass and gravel road.



### Day 4 – Örnsköldsvik to Hedemora

Along the way today we stop for refuelling energy for my wife and the Cometa. Janne is from Denmark. She goes for a swim in a lake and then makes a good imitation of the famous statue in Copenhagen, the little mermaid.

Upon reaching the High Coast region of Sweden we come across an impressive bridge but it is difficult to get a good photograph of that.

We encounter another backroad mountain pass and more gravel roads. And later, as we were close to reaching our goal for the day after a long ride, we were rewarded with a sunset

that was quite amazing.

Our host for the planned next night, that turned out to be two, was quite a guy. In his early thirties he has his own museum loaded with scooters, VWs, old bicycles and god knows what else. A magician doing panel work on Beetles and TI/T2s as well.

He had taken over his parents abandoned farm and he was rebuilding everything from below ground up. I had a great spot to hang my hammock from stripped back woodwork while Janne got a nice spot in his heated garage for the two nights, getting tucked in by the Cometa.





**Left:** The moped gang recommended that we visit the boat lock in the man-made "Göta kanal" river that crosses Sweden. Here it is, still in full use. **Middle:** Directions where to drive, as clear as sausage broth. Another Swedish expression. **Right:** Arriving in Skåne, our home county! That's quite a feeling but still some distance to go.



#### Day 5 – It Rained

Rains of biblical proportions so we decided to not drive this day. Our host was extremely kind, lending us a VW Beetle to use to explore the area with and go into town shopping. We decided to make dinner that evening and cook. Janne went into the forest picking berries making a most tasty pie for dessert. I really enjoyed driving a Beetle again, it had been too long.

I also took the opportunity to change all the cables on the Cometa hoping it would provide better conditions for the clutch to operate, as it was getting very difficult to drive, especially with the terrain being quite hilly. I also did an oil

change and removed a retrofitted ignition lock that was in place of the steering lock. It didn't fit anyway, pushing the legshield to the side and making it look warped.

The weather sort of cleared up towards the evening and we had another scooterist visiting us. To top off the moment our host pulled out three 50cc Vespa mopeds that we went out on together with the one guest arrived with, to visit the local scooter club who met in an old water mill.

In the mill there was an old Lambretta with quite a story behind it. It was purchased new by a one-armed Dane in Italy who drove it back home with his wife on the back. Having no lower arm he fabricated an arm rest fixture on the handlebar to support the arm stump. What a hero!

#### Day 6 - Hedemora to Vetlanda

Having lost one and a half days of driving we both were now quite eager to get back on the road and keen on trying to make up lost time. We set an ambitious goal of riding all the way to Vetlanda. It ended up being more than 500 kilometres ridden that day. Vetlanda was never an intended stop for us and having not planned any stay there we reached out again to the scooter scene and very soon received new offers for places to stay.

By chance we stumbled upon a moped gathering at a parking lot when passing them at a T-junction. We couldn't help but stop and have a chat. Upon discovering what we were doing, we were invited for hotdogs and coffee as well as a tour of their garage. It was an impressive place with a dyno and they were also making new Zündapp cylinders there. Super nice people



and we were very happy to meet them. Continuing on, in the middle of nowhere far up north the stretches of the roads are incredible. Our host for the night in Vetlanda had quite an impressive scooter collection too.

#### Day 7 – Vetlanda to home

Having a quick stop for petrol we noticed a whole bunch of Harley Davidsons at the coffee shop next door. We couldn't help but to take a photo with the Cometa in front. After some minutes they came out, asking what we were doing. After some persuasion that we actually rode from Haparanda, they insisted that we should come to their campsite as there was an annual Harley meeting very close by. We couldn't resist...

At the entrance gate to the Harley campsite, the president came up and asked again what was going on and who the weirdos were on the green contraption! After some more convincing he let us in for free and ran over to a bunch of participants who then gave us a wave entering the camp!

Eventually we arrived back at the scooter garage in Malmö. Over 1900km ridden in five riding days. Friends joined us and also the local newspaper greeted us coming home.

After coming home I opened an envelope in what I thought were only the registration papers. It turned out to be a letter from the seller. He recommended not trusting the Lubematic oiler system and he always added 1% extra in the tank apparently! Guess we have good proof that that is not needed at all. For the entire drive we only refilled oil once with 1 litre. Unsure of how much was in it from start, it's quite remarkable how little oil it



consumed being driven flat out for more or less a week.

Now I'm waiting for the registration papers to be cleared by the Swedish authorities and in the meantime, I'm fixing it up to clear the final MOT. The steering never felt quite right during the trip and there was a huge play. The reason became quite obvious after I took it apart. Someone had replaced the bearings with some sort of plastic bushes or washers!

I have welded the frame legshield supports back in place, making a new weld on the bracket for the steering lock that had been cut off. I am also sorting a kph speedo and getting the correct type of carburettor fitted.

It's been an epic adventure and I'm very much looking forward to riding more distances with the Cometa that I now really have a special relationship with! ☺

