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The Seduction of Il Pellicano

There are few hotels whose very name taps into our collective nostalgia quite like Il Pellicano, the storied Tuscan property that for half a century has lured photographers—John Swope, Slim Aarons, Juergen Teller—with its peerless alchemy of sex appeal and intimacy. (Makes sense: A single image of the cliffside swimming pool summons the smell of suntan oil and cypress trees.) And although the place Margherita Missoni described as "in its own bubble" is turning 50 this year, it's hardly a relic. As you'll see below, it's a case study in enduring classicism—and a standing reason to go to Italy.


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1. Signature understated elegance: A gift of seasonal fruit simply wrapped in brown paper awaits guests in their room. **2.** The iconic saltwater swimming pool overlooking the Mediterranean. **3.** Original owners Michael and Patricia Graham, who in 1965 opened Il Pellicano on a plot of land formerly owned by the Borghese family. **4.** Hedges of heather and rosemary surround the grass tennis courts. **5.** The satin bows on the maids' uniforms were inspired by an Yves Saint Laurent dress from the 1960s. **6.** A perfect pairing—an Aperol Spritz on a Missoni zigzag print. **7.** Borsalino hats in the hotel's boutique, which also stocks vintage gold jewelry, Blaze Milano smoking jackets, and Lisa-Marie Fernandez bathing suits. **8.** The outdoor bar, helmed by barman Frederico Moroso. **9.** Il Pellicano's creative director, Marie-Louise Sciò, daughter of Robert Sciò (who acquired the hotel in 1979), at the terrace restaurant. **10.** A neon-red sign, installed for the hotel's fiftieth-birthday celebration, lights up the entrance.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT HRANEK