

*Flirting With Tradition*

# BORSALINO

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Hats can be a tricky business. They're not for everyone. They're a kind of accessory that shouldn't seem like one; primarily because, if you wear a hat, it has to look like you were born with it on your head... The marvelous late Anna Piaggi could wear a tiny top hat perched like an exotic bird on her head without affectation. But for those not so whimsically inclined, it may be wise to start with a more classic and versatile varietal, one better suited for travel without a set of trunks and an army of bellboys.

A single, perfect hat for all is a dream to abandon, as caps must be tailored to their wearer and so require some individual prescriptions. Some strong candidates for the ideal hat, however, hail from the Italian staple, Borsalino, established in 1857. Its founder, Giuseppe Borsalino, reportedly acquired the recipe for his impeccable felt hats by secretly dipping his handkerchief in a vat of tar on a visit to an English hat factory. This, along with his seven-year training in Paris and a workshop in Italy, created a recipe that would

help usher in a sartorial trademark of the century. By the 1900s Borsalino's hats made their way to New York, London, and Paris. Still today, with the company's global reach, each felt hat is a careful product of a seven-week process that involves basting, steaming, dying, and blocking rabbit and hare fur. The result is stunning because it's smart and simple, and about as close to classic as fedoras come these days.

Borsalino traditional felt fedoras can temper a long winter or shade the wearer from the blaze of August days with their delicate straw weave. But as practical as hats are, and as much as they can become part of our personal architecture, Borsalinos are a fantasy. They're a fantasy of a summer day passed with afternoon cocktails outside and nothing to do, of tromping through Italian fields, missed encounters on subways, and tall Parisian windows. Those people born with a hat on their head have a terrible secret: they feign practicality in the guise of shade and warmth, but all the while they're simply wearing a dream on their head. Why not? •





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