

The New Criterion

Features

May 1996

"The Innocents Abroad" or the new pilgrim's progress

by [Mordecai Richler](#)

The business of getting from here to there has become increasingly frustrating, even infuriating, and I speak as someone who once adored traveling, the slaphappy sensation of traipsing down the twisting streets of a foreign city for the first time, your jaded senses heightened by what Gerard Manley Hopkins celebrated as “all things counter, original, spare, strange.”

Of course nowadays disembark in Moscow, Barcelona, or Tel Aviv, set out for the main boulevard, and you are bound to be deflated by the familiar: a McDonald's, a Giorgio Armani boutique, a Gucci, a pizza bar, and a shop called “Wyatt Urp” or “Doge City” [*sic*] specializing in designer jeans and hand-tooled western boots made by prisoners in China. Overpriced restaurants will welcome American Express, Visa, and MasterCard. CNN will be available on your hotel TV, and you can count on the indigenous channel to ...

Mordecai Richler

[more from this author](#)

This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 14 May 1996, on page 10

Copyright © 2009 The New Criterion | www.newcriterion.com

<http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/innocentsabroad-richler-3549>