With wit and grit, travelogues capture cities' playful sides

When I was in elementary school, trips to the library quickly morphed into global adventures whenever I flipped

RAVE through the pages of Miroslav Sasek's "This Is" series of children's books. The Czech author and illustrator's 18 enchanting travelogues, published between 1959 and 1974, featured destinations from Texas

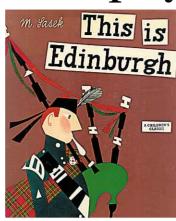
to Edinburgh to Israel. So I was

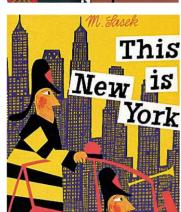
excited to learn that Rizzoli has reissued most of the books for a new generation to discover. The stylish books by the author known as M. Sasek depict familiar landmarks, but it is his playful ink-and-gouache illustrations of quirky street life — from cats dozing in Parisian storefronts to colorful laundry drying on bamboo poles over the streets of Hong Kong - that can enrapture young readers. Witty verses match the whimsy of the illustra-

tions. Alongside drawings of a

fire alarm box and a union picket

line, Sasek writes, "In New York fire strikes frequently - and so





Sasek, who died in 1980 at 63, demonstrated a keen kid's-eye view of the world. He understood that the seemingly mundane, such as street vendors and rooftop water tanks, captivate youngsters. His travelogues are not always Chamber of Commerce material — "This Is San Francisco" includes a drawing of the San Quentin prison — but the gritty realism is alluring.

While some facts in the reissued editions have been updated, the essence of the originals remains. An illustration of Times Square with billboards for TWA and Camel cigarettes, complete with a chain-smoker blowing smoke rings over automobiles with tail fins, seems straight out of "Mad Men."

I have been stockpiling the new releases hoping they inspire my children to travel the world. For me, revisiting these classics has been a sentimental journey.

CHRISTOPHER KLEIN

www.rizzoliusa.com, www.miro slavsasek.com

Colorado ranch corrals young wranglers

Children ages 10 to 14 will learn about ranch life from professional wranglers at Junior Wrangler Day Camp at Devil's Thumb Ranch in Tabernash,

CURRENTS

do people."

Colo. Programs include riding lessons, horse care, cowboy games, cattle work, and adventure trail

riding in the mornings and mountain biking, hiking, swimming, orienteering, a ropes course, and a laser biathlon in the afternoons. Outdoor recreation for parents and special lodging packages are available. Camps run June 20-22, July 11-13, and Aug. 8-10. Morning session \$405 per child, full day \$630. $800 \hbox{-} 933 \hbox{-} 4339, www.devilsthumbranch.com$

AMC speaks mountains to children

The Appalachian Mountain Club's new Kid Spoken Here program offers children's meals, family adventures, and rates of up to 25 percent off at its huts and lodges. Highland Lodge in the White Mountains, for instance, has daily activities and a new outdoor playscape where young explorers can climb a trail or crawl through a rock cave. The lodge also offers Family Adventure Weekends throughout July with guided hikes to waterfalls and some smaller peaks, and five-night Family Adventure Camps in August, with moose tours, canoe and kayak outings, and trips to a lake and a wildlife refuge. A new selection of free toddler and childsized loaner gear will be available in the lodge's L.L. Bean gear room. 603-466-2727, www.outdoors.org

Colonial Williamsburg adds some bounce

TripAdvisor recently named Williamsburg, Va., the number one US family-friendly vacation spot in its 2011 Traveler's Choice Family Awards. Colonial Williamsburg offers interactive programs with hands-on activities such as weaving and cabinetmaking; a street theater program about the Revolutionary War; and storytelling, ghost tours, and visits to area museums. Its Spring Bounce Package through June 16 starts at \$305 per night for a family of four, including unlimited general admission to Colonial Williamsburg's art museums and historic area, Busch Gardens, and Water Country USA. Some restrictions apply. 800-447-8679, www.colo nialwilliamsburg.com KARI BODNARCHUK







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