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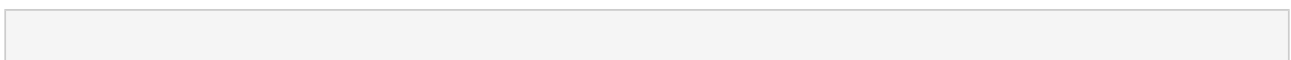
By Gerald E. Mitchell

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“Finding the missing link” –The ITD, as our travel business continued to expand, we had overlooked one valuable link to the puzzle. It became apparent that group tours required to be managed by an experienced and trusted traveler better know as; “Tour Director”, Tour Manager, Tour Escort. The TD, a matured individual who had travel overseas and would take charge and travel with the groups, capable of making discussions on the spot, not easily intimidated and pay for services rendered, deal with foreign currencies and cultures while keeping the clients safe and happy. To cover costs, I called upon every member of my family (brother-in-law, brothers, aunts, even my mother), they were now certified Trip Director’s. “On the job training” comes with experience, as I would explain to them en-route to the airport or cruise ship. Equipped with clip board, name tag, company checks, copy of tour itinerary, instructing them to “build some memories” for the clients. As time went on, requests for more exotic tours to destination offering adventure and eco-tours. To meet the demands for “Adventure” tours, I became a certified Scuba Diver, escorting clients on dive trips in the Bahamas and Columbia, switching over to more exotic spots as floating up the Nile in Egypt, floating up the Nile on Falluca’s. The term “off the beaten path” became the buzz word within the industry. Our clients wanted to experience and mingle with indigenous cultures in far corners of the globe. Our industry was experiencing a noticeable change, the people making the change, was not the travel agents, but the traveling public who were expressing a desire to explore “off the beaten path” to bewitching places that involved slogging through a forest, paddling down a river, confronting suspicious people, sleeping in hostile places all the time testing their adaptability, while hoping for some sort of revelation. For clients that did not know their country, that didn’t present risks we provided a series of tour programs for The National Parks and Recreation catering to today’s “Baby Boomers”, folks who wanted to fulfill their childhood dream, having spent a good portion of their life working for a corporation and saving their money now wanted to travel to safe locations under the guidance of professional Tour Directors. American public was now becoming a restless nation. Benefiting from this cultural change, the motor coach industry in it’s infancy, “took off”, while under the direction of professional Tour Leaders (Trip Directors) who became much in demand to escort motor coach groups to know but less challenging destinations as the Grand Ole Opry, Martha’s Vineyard, and Cape Cod, and Canada.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

The author, Gerald Mitchell has served as adjunct professor at four U.S. universities and lectured on sustainable travel-tourism development for the Organization of American States, Canada, Russia, the Caribbean, and at the nation's military academies at West Point and Annapolis. He has served as a special advisor to the U. S. Naval Command, Guantanamo, Cuba the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Agency for International Development. In this last capacity, Gerald worked with the kingdom of Jordan to develop certification standards for the nation's Royal Society of Conservation, funded by Queen Noor of Jordan, continues to provide a quality experience for tourists to Caribbean, Europe, Asia, South America, Canada, and the Canadian Arctic.

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