

Travellers checks



WITH BRAD CROUCH

Dynamamos key to a fantastic trip

HUMAN dynamics – the interplay between people that, if massaged carefully, can turn strangers into a positive community, athletes into a successful team, disparate employees into a cohesive firm.

On a group tour, it can make the difference between an interesting trip and the time of your life. I recently joined a group tour, with some trepidation – would we get on, or get on each others' nerves?

This is where the tour escort becomes pivotal. As well as showing the sights, a golden guide will ensure everyone mixes, has a good time and no one is late. In short, they will make the dynamic between individuals positive.

On this Bunnik Tours trip to South America we had a good start – the group were active 50-somethings keen to make new friends, in line with Bunnik's motto "Not Too Young & Not Too Old".

In this atmosphere our escort through Ecuador, Melanie Simons, was a delight. Belgian-born, with half a dozen languages and an infectious love of Ecuador, she ensured everyone had a great time. She took us to places off the official tour, tutored us in Spanish, suggested great restaurants, made us laugh and taught us local toasts.

She even talked us into buying and selling a piglet in an amazing rural Native American market, crossing the line between tourists and participants. Hilarious! Mel even turned slight hiccups such as our coach getting briefly bogged into an adventure (as in "come on everyone, this is a Bunnik's adventure, let's all enjoy it!").

In short, she was the glue that bound us as we bonded. And bond we did – by the end of the trip I regarded all in the group as friends.

Our escort on the second leg of the trip, in Peru, was similarly a gem. Gina Chavez, with her flashing dark eyes and cheeky sense of humour, joined us after we had already bonded.

But her own work with the human dynamics of 20 people was just as successful, ensuring the good times went well beyond the fun of touring.

Throw in fabulous hotels like a 300-year-old hacienda and a jungle retreat, Incan and Spanish history and the thrill of touring landscapes from the Andes to Amazon rainforest and you have a recipe for indelible memories from South America.

On my final day every person on tour, from places as diverse as Busselton, Shepparton and McLaren Vale, told me privately they would happily book another trip with Bunnik Tours. Dynamic!