

A Journey to Find our Princess



We picked up our beautiful princess, Sierra Grace a few weeks ago, 1/11/10, from an orphanage 1 1/2 hours south of Kemerovo City, Russia. It was the culmination of a long and exhaustive process but all of the waiting and paperwork were forgotten as we held our beautiful daughter tight in our arms on the van ride back to the hotel to begin the start of a new adventure in our lives as Sierra joined our family and truly made our family complete.

We began our adoption journey towards the end of 2008. My wife, Natalie and I, are extremely lucky and blessed to be the parents of 3 beautiful boys, Jordan (14), Mitchell (12), and Louis (10) but we have both always dreamed of the possibility of raising a daughter. We began researching adoption on the internet and faced a huge amount of information available. We decided early on that we would prefer a baby girl around 18 months to 2 years old, for her to be as healthy as possible, understanding that nothing can be guaranteed health wise, and for our adoption journey to be completed within a year. After spending countless days and weeks pouring over adoption internet blogs and untold adoption agency websites we narrowed it down to 3 or 4 agencies which we all contacted to run thorough their program. We were very impressed in our discussions with Beacon House as they were very friendly, answered all of our questions promptly, and gave us confidence that healthy girls were available for adoption from Russia and that the process could be completed in around a year. This was contrary to many other agencies and blogs who were quoting upwards of 18 months or longer for girl adoptions. In the end it still came down to a huge leap of faith and placing a huge emotional and financial level of trust in an agency and coordinator we were unlikely to ever meet in person and would only maintain contact by phone and email. We were also reassured by the fact that Beacon House employed local people in the regions of Russia which would assist in the process.

We submitted our first dossier to Linda at the end of March 2009 and eagerly awaited the news of a referral. Throughout this wait Linda kept us reassured that although she could not guarantee anything she was confident that we would receive a referral in late summer/fall. Just towards the end of August we received word that there was a referral available of an 8 month old girl in Kemerovo. She would not be available officially for another couple of months so we would not be able to visit until October or November but if we signed a few documents we could move forward. We left Virginia on October 20 to meet Sierra for the first time. We flew knowing only about two Russian words, "Nyet" and "Da" (oh and "Spasiba") and put all of our faith and trust into Val, Irina, and her driver. The first visit with Sierra was unforgettable, she was a little shy, but quickly warmed up and played with the toys we had brought. Two more visits over the next two days and we knew that Sierra was meant to be a part of our family, we decided to proceed with the adoption signing the official paperwork before heading on the long trip back to Virginia.

Two more trips were required to complete the adoption as it fell in the middle of the US and Russian Christmas vacation and New Year. The preparation of the Court dossier, although it seemed like the paperwork would never end, was greatly assisted by Linda providing us with a comprehensive checklist upfront covering all of the requirements and enabled us to get everything sorted out in an efficient manner. Our court date was December 17, we were prepped with likely questions we would be asked by Svetlana and after about a 1 hour hearing it was official...we were now the parents of Sierra Grace Allen!!! We returned on January 10 and during a few days in Kemerovo waiting for her passport we got to know Sierra's habits, how much she loves her food and the bath, and how she is not the best sleeper in the world. We were fortunate enough to get her passport a day earlier than planned from Kemerovo and due to some great planning and preparation by Val in Moscow we were able to get her US Visa and fly home 4 days earlier than planned.

Now three weeks home Sierra is quickly transitioning to her new life, her brothers are great helpers and want to get involved with feeding her and playing with her and showing her off to their school friends. She is following us around everywhere, eating everything in sight, and being spoiled by everyone around her. She has only started walking a few weeks ago but already is gaining confidence and falling over less and less. She is our little Russian angel and brings sunshine into our life every day!

We are so grateful for all of the help and assistance in our adoption journey that Beacon House gave us to make this possible. From all of the questions we had for Linda when preparing the paperwork and throughout the three trips with travel delays, then in Moscow and Kemerovo from Irina, Val, Tatiana, and our driver. We always felt extremely safe and well cared for and everyone was just a short email or phone call away whenever we had travel delays or simply a had a question. Traveling in the middle of winter we always felt in very safe hands driving to the orphanage on many occasions in quite dangerous conditions. We were never afraid to ask questions and were always kept informed throughout the whole process. I would not hesitate to recommend Beacon House for any other prospective adoptive parents. We have had a truly remarkable journey and a life changing experience in our adoption of our beautiful Sierra Grace.

