

The Journey

by Deborah Pope

I came home from Wuhan with my daughter just three months ago (July, 1993). She is incredibly wonderful, and I feel so lucky to have her with me. I would not want any other baby as my first daughter, and am overjoyed with my passage to motherhood.

These are some bits of advise that I found helpful as I journeyed to China to find my daughter. They are not in any particular order, and they reflect my experience. Your trip will probably be very different. Approaching this voyage as a great adventure and greeting it with flexibility are the best things you can do for yourself. Remember that the country to which you are going is the birthplace of your child. It will be nice to have good memories of your trip to share with your daughter as she grows up.

- 1.) Expect enormous obstacles to fall into your path.
- 2.) Expect to feel like everything is disintegrating. Expect to feel out of control.
- 3.) Stay calm.
- 4.) Be confident that everything will work out. Solutions WILL be found for all the enormous obstacles.
- 5.) The Chinese officials DO want the process to succeed.
- 6.) Treat your hosts with respect and appreciation.
- 7.) DO NOT exhibit anger and/ or indignation.
- 8.) Vent your fears and frustrations to your partner or a close friend.
- 9.) Do not be afraid of requesting the information and help you need.
- 10.) Understand that the Chinese love their children.
- 11.) Do not expect to meet your child in a quiet, calm environment.
- 12.) Try to ask all the questions you have about your child's history, but do not expect to be able to ask or get answers to all the questions you may have about your child's history.
- 13.) You may bond with your child immediately.
- 14.) You may not bond with your child for days, weeks, or even months.
- 15.) You WILL bond with your child.
- 16.) Do not worry if you wonder if this baby is the right baby.

- 17.) Be calm, follow your instincts, and do not condemn yourself for any doubts you may have.
- 18.) Make sure that you have carefully researched the least expensive way to make international phone calls from China to the US with your telephone company. Do not make international calls on hotel lines unless collect or through ATT's USA Direct.
- 19.) Understand that you represent the parents who are yet to travel to China for their children.
- 20.) DO NOT drink the tap water. You CAN take showers without getting water in your mouth.
- 21.) The boiled water in the hotel thermos really is boiled and safe. Bring two Rubbermaid graduated quart bottles to cool it in and to mix formula.
- 22.) Bring mostly lactose based formula for your baby.
- 23.) Snugglis, or any of the carry slings, are great for transporting your baby.
- 24.) The Chinese tend to swarm around you when you go out with your baby. Don't be afraid of letting them see the baby, and don't be afraid of withdrawing her from view when you feel you must.
- 25.) If you have never been to China, expect it to be completely different from any place you have ever been.
- 26.) Keep your paperwork in one organized packet. Put all new documents and photos in this packet. Take the packet with you whenever you must accomplish any official function. Keep this packet with you as much as possible.
- 27.) Always keep your and your child's passports on your person.
- 28.) Don't lose your sense of humor. Your hosts have a sense of humor too.
- 29.) DO NOT introduce politics into discussions.
- 30.) When leaving China, check your luggage through to the US if you are changing planes in Hong Kong or Shanghai.
- 31.) Ask other parents of children from China about their experiences. Be sure to speak to families who traveled to the same city as you and/ or who have traveled during the same season.
- 32.) Expect this experience to be one of the most exciting of your life.
- 33.) If you are single, seriously consider having someone accompany you. Anyone traveling with you, however, should understand that this is not a sightseeing trip. You and your baby will be the central focus and concern at all times.
- 34.) Expect to be exhausted even before you receive your child. The emotional and psychological strain on this trip is enormous.
- 35.) Expect to be even more exhausted once you receive your child.
- 36.) Expect to play with your child and begin to establish your own routines with her from the very first minute you are together.

- 37.) Through trial and error make sure that the holes in your bottle nipples are large enough for a baby who is used to getting her formula rather quickly.
- 38.) Don't be afraid of using the pacifier.
- 39.) The home recipe for pedialyte (used to counteract dehydration) is one level teaspoon of sugar and one pinch of salt in eight ounces of water Pack a few ounces of sugar and salt, carry a teaspoon and cup measure. This is very important. If any of the babies become dehydrated, this mixture will save the day.
- 40.) Bring antibiotics for your baby, but do not administer them until you have consulted a physician.
- 41.) Before departing for China, consult your pediatrician regarding what medications to bring for the baby.
- 42.) Consult your doctor regarding what medications to bring for yourself.
- 43.) Ask your doctor about the immunizations you will need: Hepatitis B, Gamma Globulin, Polio, Tetanus.
- 44.) Bring some food stuffs for yourself. Eating some meals in your hotel room makes life easier.
- 45.) Shop in local stores in China. Find foods from China that you enjoy snacking on.
- 46.) DO NOT expect your American adoption agency or facilitator to meet all your needs or to tell you everything you need to know.
- 47.) If something goes wrong, try to concentrate on how to move forward and solve the problem. Let go of trying to figure out who is to blame and who will pay for the mistake.
- 48.) The only real mistake is wasting energy on anything unnecessary to getting and then keeping your baby happy and healthy.
- 49.) By the time you return home you will feel as if you have been away for a lifetime.
- 50.) You have.

Deborah Pope lives in Brooklyn, New York. Her daughter, Abigail Tao Yu, was born on November 13, 1993