



Michele & Ruby's Pic of the Day  
Postcards from Hanoi  
Oct 6th-28th, 2007

# OCT. 7TH



Brunch at the sofital hotel. Amazing. Shopped for hours! Streets in old quarter....side walks....sure, but really parking for scoters...must walk in street with insane drivers. Hottest October anyone can remember. Hair stuck to head all day....just have to give in. Tomorrow off to orphanage. Love ya.

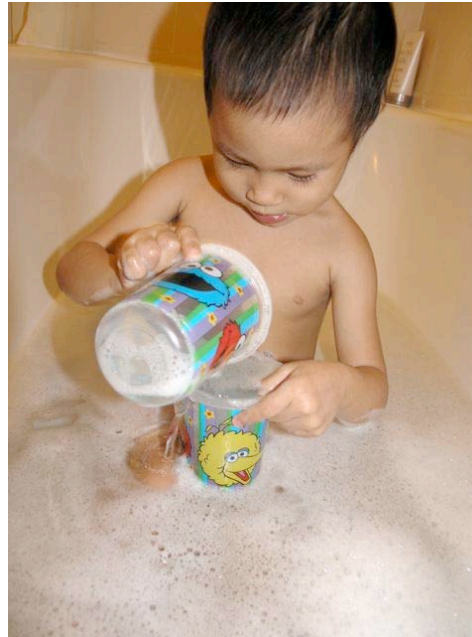
OCT. 8TH



It's official – at least in Vietnam!

Long exhausting day. Here are a few pics. She's a trooper. I even got a smile tonight before bed. It's all good. She reminds me of anacapri! I think they're soul sisters and now, real, forever sisters. More after some sleep.

# OCT. 9TH



Thank god for water and cups. Rough day. Ruby very emotional, crying at the window. Crying her self to sleep. It's so hard to watch. I guess it's something that she also cried when I had to go to the Vietnam passport office without her. We're bonding but it's rough for the poor thing. These fotos are from a respite this evening. The last one was where she was showing me that she knows how to wash herself (thank you very much). She's SO very almost 3. Love to all . Michele

# OCT. 10TH

Hi all. I think we're making some progress. We had a short cry at wake up and after nap. A good long wail before dinner, but in between we had some fun too. She's starting to talk more. And more important boss me around...put that here, give me that, I want more. Plus, she's showing alittle resistance to things, testing me. Never thought I'd be so glad to have a toddler test me but, according to the books, its a good sign of bonding progress. She pushed a limit and I actually said 'no' to here...in Vietnamese. Typically toddler behavior, I love it.



Trying to expand my Vietnamese vocab (from hello and thank you). It's a tough language to get right. I thought I asked Ruby if she'd like more of the egg roll like item at dinner and got the wrong inflection and asked her if she'd like some more wood table to eat. Had dinner with lovely Seattle family, wife is fluent and husband learning. Well, I hope I get points for trying (from someone anyway). Photo today is of Ruby and her playmate (pron. knee-um aka the Vietnamese Jackie O) from the orphanage (Seattle couple's daughter) playing in the toddler center at the hotel. Tomorrow big red tape day as we have first interview with US embassy for Ruby's visa into US (she's not a citizen until she touches US soil). No current ETA home.

Cheers for now. Missing family and friends, so send email if you can and let me know how you're doing. Michele

# OCT. 11TH

Hello.

Open in the year 1027, the temple of lit is the oldest university in Vietnam. In the attached photos, you'll see Ruby in front of the Pond of Calm and in front of a shop selling water puppets.

Much better day today. A few watery eyes but only one short sob. After her nap, she did seem a bit sad and laid on the couch staring at a painting of rice fields filled with farmers. She loves the painting (on the wall in the room), it must remind her of her past home, the general area around the orphanage looks similar.

Played fun game of 'hello' and 'goodbye' with her. She opened and closed one of the doors in the room and once said 'goodbye' in English! Kinda cool. Also, she called me 'Mei' today which means mother. Of course, it wasn't in tenderness but in the pursuit of assistance for something or other, but you know, we moms, take it where we get it!

We are in legal limbo while the Vietnamese gov't works on her passport and the US embassy works on her visa into the US. Trying to arrange trip to Ha Long Bay, but will stay in touch as always.

Cheers for now. Michele



# OCT. 12TH

Hello all. Pretty good day. Ruby Phuong played all morning (hard) with her two friends from the orphanage (the children of the Seattle couple, I mentioned yesterday). A good wail when her nanny came by to say a final good bye, but I'd say the day overall was successful. She said 'goodbye' and 'peak-a-boo' several times today, in English, as well as calling me "mei" (meaning mother, and also in the adoption vernacular, 'strange but nice lady who gives me M&Ms'). From the bath, she yelled several times in Vietnamese 'mom come here'. So strange how in any language they manage to summon you. Today's photo was taken as Phuong realized that all three oranges were for her and her friends to share. Such riches. Much love. Michele



# OCT. 13TH

Hello. Milestone day....we went the whole day without a single tear! (lots of 'no's, however, which I say 'bring it on, sister, I can totally handle that.')

Spent the morning at the Museum of Ethnology ([http://www.vme.org.vn/exhibitions\\_outdoor.asp](http://www.vme.org.vn/exhibitions_outdoor.asp)). The picture is of RubyPhuong and I on the courtyard of one traditional long/communal house with a view of another behind us. In the very center left of the photo, you can see how you reach the raised houses (raised to help keep it cooler)....still steps lead to the 'courtyard'. They are pretty cool to climb and RubyPhuong (RP for short from now on) was a solid slider taking it all in and in stride. Afternoon, we went to the famous water puppets which was just amazingly cool (again, search for Vietnamese water puppets on YouTube, there are some bootleg videos of performances). After the show, we took a cyclo back, a bike taxi, which got us up close and personal with Hanoi traffic, which is pretty much insane...I think I'm officially 'into' it. The city is so cool. Lots of love. Until tomorrow. Michele

P.S. PH actually got into the .5 deep meter kid pool which is has gone out of her way to avoid, although she loves the bath. She is so much like Anacapri. Got to warm up to it and then, stand back b/c she's going to master it in one go!



OCT. 14TH



Hi all. Another long bus ride today. Resulting, however, in a lovely 4 hour boat ride on Ha Long Bay with it's misty waters and mysterious limestone formations. Also, fantastic lunch aboard boat. Ruby impressed everyone with her ability to eat, especially the various seafood items...fish, crab, shrimp, and octopus. Then there was the usual fruit orgy...orange, 3 mini bananas, and I'm sure more that I didn't see. On the drive home, the guide asked me if the US government gives us money to take care of children (from other countries, I guess). That made us laugh, surely no one would suffer the expense and wait of adoption with out some financial gain. He was really very sweet and thank us for adopting the children. He hoped they'd grow to be good US citizens and build a stronger relationship with Vietnam. (He also told me it's not healthy for Ruby to eat so much at one meal :) Love to all. Michele

# OCT. 15TH

Actually taken yesterday on Ha Long Bay. Ruby with dragon fruit. Tastes good, looks way better, so cool. Mellow day today. Item of note, as we played on slides, RP brushed away a lock of hair that had fallen in my face...small gesture but a leap of intimacy. Love to all. Michele



# OCT. 16TH

Hi all. We had a long, hard day today. On the positive side, we picked up the Vietnamese passports for the kids, the first step out of country. We also had the official exit medical exam and RP passed with flying colors. Of course, the medical exam was scheduled during nap time and we were there for over two hours. All the kids handled it well, but entered the evening drained and holding on by their last straw. We left dinner a bit early and headed home, got half way through her bath and her last straw broke. She melted with lots of good old fashion almost 3 year old kicking and screaming and crying. We cut short the bath and did some rocking, the whole time with PH whimpering like a hurt pup. Very sad. However, she went down fast and hard and is now, as you can see from the photo, snuggled down in a light blanket my mom made. Hoping for a cheerier Wednesday am. Cheers for now. Michele

P.S. tomorrow am, the museum of the revolution!



# OCT. 17TH

Hi. Nice mellow day. Lots of hanging out. A good long nap helped us both. Here's RP diggin into her pasta dinner. You can also just see the straps on her backpack. She LOVES her backpack and keeps it on all day, would wear it to bed if she could.

Waiting waiting waiting to hear from US embassy about 2nd interview, which is second to last hurdle. Just off the phone with local agency person, he suggests that we call the embassy tomorrow and 'remind' them we're waiting. I can do that. As Andy will tell you, I'm real good at reminding.. :) Cheers for now.  
Michele



# OCT. 18TH

Waiting for the US embassy to bless the adoption, then we can get Ruby's visa and get home! In the meantime, we are pondering what to do on our 3rd weekend here to keep busy and keep from storming the embassy. All goes well on the relationship building front. Sweet and sour moments, very age appropriate. Here is a look at a very sweet moment. Love from Michele and RP.



# OCT. 21st

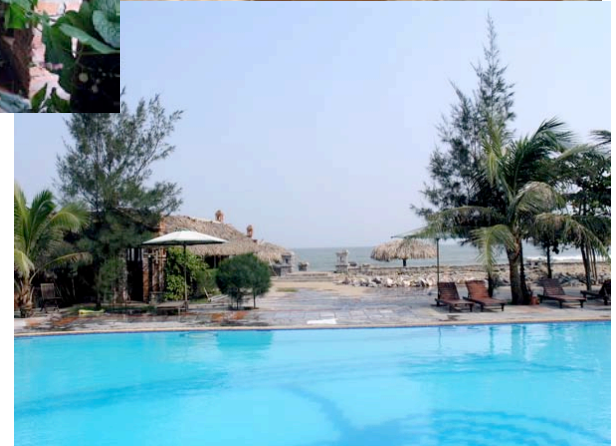
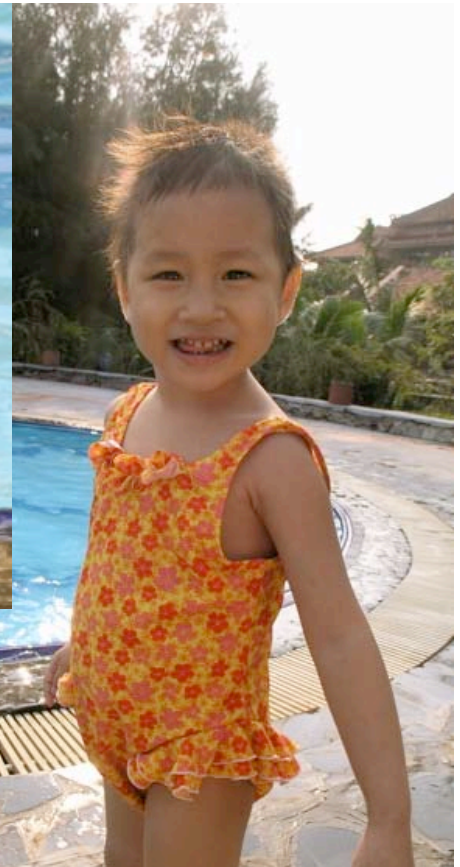
Hello all. Spent Saturday at a resort. Lovely but a long bus ride from Hanoi (sort of our motto now, check it out: <http://www.vanchai.vn.com/vanchai.htm>)

Attached are some photos I took as well.

Friday am we learned that all kids in our group have been approved. We go for 2nd Embassy meeting Tuesday afternoon, then get visa for Ruby end of day Wednesday. Ideally that puts us on a plane to SFO on Thursday, arriving about 2pm local time Thursday (we gain a day going that way).

It's going to be hard to get through three full days more 'cause I'm ready to be home with my Andy, Anacapri, and Ozzie. One can only pack sooo much.

Chat with ya tomorrow. Love Michele and RP



OCT. 22nd



Hi. It's been two weeks since RP and I met. Here's a still life of the orphanage yard taken that memorable day. We're doing great. Looking forward to home. No new pictures today. Best. Michele

OCT. 23rd



Hi. Long playdate this afternoon. I have no idea what they were saying but there was a lot of laughing and chatting found in our place, Beginning to pack!  
Cheers for now. Michele

# OCT. 23rd

Hi all, we did it. We made it home. Our first night was rough with a fair amount of Ruby tears, but today was better than we expected, lots of laughs and giggles (although you can't tell from the foto). Big and little sister are devoted. Anacapri is just amazing and Ruby is in awe of her radiant big sis. Big hugs and kisses to the Berner family for the wonderful banner. Love to all. More to follow in the upcoming days. Michele

