

# Pics from the East – April 21 2016 at 11:26AM



Loving the single track around here!

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## Family Picture



# Mid-Autum Festival 2014

[2006](#)

[2007](#)

2008 – in America

[2009](#)

[2010](#)

[2011](#)

2012 – we celebrated in a local park. Photos not yet edited.

2013 – in America

After just one week of Chinese school, the kids had a break because today was Mid-Autum Festival.

I spent the morning homeschooling. Schäfer has become obsessed with chapter books so on every 15 minute break he curls up in a chair and reads. I wish he would go outside and run non-stop for 15 minutes, but he'd rather solve a mystery.

This afternoon, friends came over. The kids played outside for 2.5 hours in the hot sun. I love that we live in a place where they can run and climb trees and feel a little freedom.

Hubs worked until 6pm. Then, we had our first ever “pigs in a blanket” which was a BIG hit with the kids. We walked to a local park, ate mooncakes, and watched a fountain show. Then it was time to get them home, scrub the black off their feet, kiss their sweet cheeks and turn the lights off.

Here are a couple of photos from Hubs phone.



Schäfer – 7 – orange mooncake  
Sianna – 5 – strawberry mooncake  
Selah – 3 – grape mooncake  
Senna – 1 – pineapple mooncake



Schäfer, Sianna and Selah watching the fountain show with the moon in the background.

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# 1st Day of Chinese School 2014

We've had lots of firsts around here.

Last Monday, Sianna started her first day of Chinese Kindergarten. She attends each day from 8am – 11:40am. So far, three hours of Chinese immersion is enough for her. (Actually, the class sleeps for 2 hours in the afternoon so I don't see any point in paying for her to sleep at school.)

So far, Sianna likes her class and her teachers. She especially likes the morning exercises which are set to Disney music.

Speaking of music...

News: Selah, age 3, would like to take a dance class. Her desire to twirl is intense.

Back to today...

Schäfer attended his first day of Chinese grade school.

Gone are the sweet days of kindergarten. Sniff sniff.

It took him a while to realize that he wasn't going to the same school as Sianna. Last year, he attended Xue Qian Ban (pre-1st), but since we had a work commitment in June he did not get to participate in the kindergarten graduation ceremony.

Last night, I laid in bed asking Hubs if we were doing the right thing. There are so many "what if's" involved when putting a foreign kid in a national school.

Today, dispelled any fear.

Schäfer walked into the class ready to make friends and learn to read and write Chinese. Unfortunately, there was no class today.

Hubs spent over an hour filling out paperwork in Chinese and listening to the teacher's instructions.

Meanwhile, Schäfer played with new friends on the basketball court. The kids were all asking him the usual questions. One asked if he was American. Schäfer replied, "My mother is American and my father is American so I am American." This is a very accurate answer as to how he maintained his US citizenship!

Later Schäfer told me, "I don't mind their questions. Eventually, they will get to know me."

While Schäfer played chase, the Chinese Grandma's asked me how Selah was going to attend 1st grade when she didn't speak very much. I explained that even though Selah is just 2 inches shorter than their children, she's only 3. My seven-year-old would be attending 1st grade.

As far as attending Chinese grade school, it's different than kindergarten. We're taking it one week at a time.

We did have a talk with his teacher. She was shocked that Schäfer would only go for a half day. I'm not quite sure she understands that he still has to come home and tackle 2-3 hours worth of school in English.

When we explained that Schäfer can speak some Chinese, but he cannot read or write Chinese very well, she wasn't phased at all. She said that she starts all students at the very beginning to make sure the basics are covered.

A new adventure begins...

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# Market Day

For the last 2 years, we've lived in 90 square meters.

One would think that this situation would be the perfect opportunity to downsize.

We did.

A new season in life brought a few additional changes as well. After Senna's birth, I no longer needed to keep my pregnancy clothes. I no longer needed to store 0-3 month baby clothes. In fact, I no longer needed to keep all those in-between sizes – not pregnancy clothes, but also not my true size.

So I started making a pile of everything we didn't love or use often.

That pile grew and grew.

I gave stuff away. (At times, I might have forced people to take items from our home.)

I listed pregnancy clothes and baby items in a provincial newsletter that goes out to the entire expat community in Yunnan.

And yet, there was still stuff that we didn't need.

This morning, after the rained stopped, we went down to our local market and set up a tarp. At first, people just looked at us. When they realized that we could speak Chinese, it was like the floodgates opened. We were swarmed.

It was intense.

I had some clothes on hangers, most of the clothes I had in

bags or boxes. I quickly learned that the locals were not interested in the hanging clothes. They wanted to dig through the bags.

Most items went for 2-3 rmb. Quite a few went for 1rmb.

The point was not to make money. The point was to downsize.

Things were stolen. Everyone was crowding around and it was hard to keep track of who was grabbing what and who had paid. There was about an hour that was super crowded.

One person paid us in fake money. She bought five rmb worth of clothes and gave us 100rmb – taking our real 95rmb back in change.

Hubs decided that she must have really needed that money. I decided that she figured out how to pull a quick on on the foreigners. (Note: if you ever do this type of sale, just avoid all 100 and 50 rmb bills. They are the fake ones.)

Probably my favorite moment of the day was when an old Grandma asked me how much a newborn's hair band was.

Nai Nai: How much is this?

Me: 1 rmb

Nai Nai: Will you take 9 mao?

Me: No. I don't have any mao to give you in change. It's 1 rmb.

At the end of 3 hours, we were down to one box so we loaded it up and went home for lunch and naps all around.

Feeling guilty for making Schäfer help us sell stuff, asking Sianna and Selah to sit on a stool, and containing poor Senna in the Ergo on Hubs back, we took our kids to the Pirate Park for some super fun play. Then, we treated the kids to hamburgers at a new-to-us local restaurant called Serendipity. Finally, we squeezed in one final ice cream at Dairy Talk before the cold weather sets in.

Today was a good day.

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## 4 to a room

On August 14th, when we moved into this apartment, we put all four kids in one room.

The sleeping arrangement is as follows:

Schäfer – top bunk

Sianna and Selah – bottom bunk

Senna – crib

(Eventually, Schäfer will have his own room, but at present, our butcher block counter-tops are drying in his space.)

We decided that after 16 months of being in our room, it was time for Senna to join her sisters. Hubs purposefully put the crib together in the girls room. (It's too wide to move from room to room.)

We warned the kids that they had to be very, very quiet when Senna came into the room. First I would nurse and rock her, then I would gently place her in the crib.

Enter: a teachable moment.

Between the giggles, the loud whispers, the sudden thirst that needed to be quenched and additional excursions to the bathroom, Senna woke and released her frustration through a very loud cry.

Schäfer tried to coax her with lullabies while Sianna and Selah filled her crib with lovies and extra blankets.

Nothing worked.



Eventually, Senna wore herself out and went back to sleep. The biggies were mentally worn out too.

These days, when I bring Senna into the room, all is quiet. Lesson learned.

In other news, last night Senna decided to grow up just a little bit more. For the first time, she slept through the night.

After 1 year, 4 months and 24 days, this Mommy and Papa slept through the night too.

High fives all around.