Hello from Down Under! (Farewell Asia)

July 23, 2007 By Regan Hofmann

Hi! Sean and I made it from Vietnam, via Singapore, to Sydney, Australia. Friday's travel was a bit of a blur as I accidentally took a sleeping pill AND an Atavan on the plane. We arrived at 5 a.m. Australia time and spent a day and a half recovering so we'd be ready to roll again for the International AIDS Society conference...

Sydney is an exquisite city. Though it's winter, the air is clear, the sky is blue and the sun is shining. As much as I loved Asia, it's a welcome relief to escape the heat and smog. No one is wearing a mask/scarf/t-shirt over their face to block the pollution. And I didn't realize how incessant the street noise and honking was until it was gone. We did have a little noise in the hotel the first night as the Asia Cup international soccer tournament is on and EVERYONE (except Americans) loves the game of soccer. We saw Japan beat Vietnam while we were in Vietnam; Saturday we saw Japan beat Australia shortly after we arrived in Australia. I fear we might be bad luck for the national team of the country we land in. Last night, we saw South Korea beat Iran, preventing a final between Iraq and Iran. Who knows who would have won if we had traveled to Iran. Now, it's South Korea versus Iraq. Hmmm. Hard to pick a team to root for in that match. I have to say, I am increasingly liking the game of soccer and have great admiration for the players who run for 90 minutes non-stop in the incredible heat. They get so soaked with perspiration they need to hike their shorts way up before taking a penalty kick just to have their legs free enough of the cloth to swing their leg. Many of the games we have watched have ended in a draw and they've had to result to a penalty kick-off to have a winner. I thought my job was stressful until I saw the faces of the goalies before the penalty kicks. Talk about grace under pressure!

Before I blog about beautiful Sydney and the start of the conference, I wanted to share a few more pictures from the remainder of the Taiwan trip. Below is a shot from the aforementioned Taipei Salon. And Sean and I in the news!

Sunday night before leaving Taiwan, Nick Papp had a wonderful dinner for us at his home in Taipei. Below are some fun shots of our new friends. We were so sad to say farewell!

The first shot is ICRT radio host Rick Monday (and Sean and me); next is Gabrielle, a beautiful and fascinating film producer/Fulbright scholar/professor from USC and Nick Papp; next is Nick, Nicole (of Harmony Home) and me; and finally Szu Lee (of AIT) and Nick).



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