

Rebecca Kalpakoff



16 March 2018

My name is Bec Kalpakoff and my husband and I are currently doing surrogacy in the Ukraine.

HERE IS MY STORY

We fell pregnant naturally in August 2015. In October 2015 we went for our 12 week scan, unfortunately there was no heartbeat and I underwent not one but two D&C's.

We tried again with no luck and finally in October 2016 I was diagnosed with Stage 4 Asherman's syndrome (AS). My AS developed due to having a D&C, something I wasn't made aware of before the procedure. After the diagnosis, I underwent many surgical procedures in Perth with no positive outcome. So in May 2017 I travelled to Sydney to see a Professor who specialises in AS for a second opinion. He was not impressed with what my doctor had done to me in Perth and said my AS was quite severe and unfortunately he could not help me and if we wanted our own family, surrogacy would be our only option.

I have one sister but she is younger and has not had children so that was not option due to the current laws in WA. Also even if we did find an altruistic surrogate in Australia we discovered it would be a very long and arduous process. So we started looking at overseas surrogacy. All of South East Asia had just shutdown their foreign surrogacy programs so the only countries that allow foreign surrogacy is the USA, Canada, Greece and the Ukraine. After hours and hours of research and weighing in the costs associated with doing surrogacy in each of these countries we decided on the Ukraine.

SURROGACY IN THE UKRAINE

Paid surrogacy in the Ukraine has been legal for about 15 years and what we liked about the Ukraine was the fact the minute our surrogate is pregnant we are the legal parents and the surrogate has no right to the baby (unlike the laws in Australia).

JUNE 2017 – We signed up to our surrogacy agency, New Hope. Our agency is run by an amazing women who organises everything for us – from picking us up from the airport, all the medical appointments, the surrogate, paperwork, legal documents etc.

AUGUST 2017 – We chose our surrogate and she began all the tests etc required by law.

SEPTEMBER 2017 – We flew to Kiev, Ukraine to do our first IVF cycle, which didn't go as planned. We were due to leave on Tuesday 19th Sept, but of course my cycle came early. It was 1pm on Thursday 14th Sept afternoon and

we had to drop everything and get to Kiev by the next day. Somehow we made it to Kiev on the Friday and were taken straight from the airport to the fertility clinic. But when we got there they discovered I had 2 big cysts growing -I had never suffered from cysts before and I had had a scan in Australia a few weeks beforehand and it was clear.

If we wanted to go ahead with the IVF round they had to remove them the next day. So on Saturday 16th Sept they removed the cysts and I was not put under or given any drugs! In Australia you would normally have a general anaesthetic, but in the Ukraine they told me that was not necessary.

Our bad luck didn't stop there – the doctor in Australia had not given me all my blood test results required to start IVF in the Ukraine. I contacted them back in Perth and as I was doing Surrogacy in the Ukraine they refused to email me a copy of my test results. It was so frustrating but in the end we bribed the nurse with Vodka and chocolates and ended up starting our first IVF cycle on 16th September.

During our stay in Kiev we meet our amazing surrogate, Anastasia, for the first time. It was an amazing experience – she is 23, married for 7 years and has a 3 year old daughter. She doesn't speak a word of English, so we communicate via google translate.

After a pretty eventful time in Kiev we arrived back in Australia to find out we only got one embryo from that IVF cycle. We were bitterly disappointed, but within 2 days of being home we decided I would go back in December and try again.

DECEMBER 2017 – I travelled back to Kiev for round 2 of IVF. Mitch, my husband couldn't take any more time off work so I flew over on my own and spent Christmas in the Ukraine. This cycle went to plan and was more successful than the last. We got four embryos and on 23rd December 2017 two were transferred to our surrogate.

JANUARY 2018 – On Saturday 6th January we received the exciting news that our surrogate is pregnant. She had a blood test on the Friday and it was a positive. Our first scan was on 18th January 2018 and to our surprise we were told we were having twins. If all goes to plan we will be flying to Kiev at the beginning of August just before the birth.

MARCH 2018 - Our fraternal twins are doing well and are 15 weeks.


COMMENTS REGARDING SURROGACY IN WA

- * When we looked at doing surrogacy locally we discovered that the process was very long and was going to cost the same or even more then doing it in the Ukraine.
- * The laws around local surrogacy seemed quite outdated and complicated.
- * Regulated and lawfully paid surrogacy should be considered. If done correctly it works really well in the Ukraine.

- * What I find difficult to understand is the fact that if you do overseas surrogacy why can your child/children get Australian citizenship, but you can't be recognised as the parents under Family Law - even if they are biological yours like our twins are.
- * I also question why embryo donation is legal in WA, but paid surrogacy or sending my embryos overseas for surrogacy is illegal?
- * What really turned us off doing surrogacy in Australia was the fact that the IP's are not listed on the birth certificate - especially if the child is biologically yours. I question as well why the surrogate has a ' 6 month cooling off ' period where they can change their mind about giving the child to the parents.
- * The cost of doing local surrogacy is quite high - it would be more attainable to more couples if you were allowed to claim IVF and other hospital bills back through your private health insurance.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission. I am happy to discuss my experience and comments further if required.

Yours Sincerely



Rebecca Kalpakoff

16/03/18