

From ARK to Battersea

In June 2006, eight ARK dogs flew from Japan to London to find new homes through Battersea Dogs' Home. Here is an interview by Eikoku Tokushu (Oct 2006) with Marmul's (now called Simba) new owner, Vanessa Vajana. All eight dogs have now been adopted.



Q. I wonder if she had ever seen the sea before?

Vanessa : Not sure but she has been very frightened of the water and of the brightly coloured canoes that are on the seafront. She now enjoys walking on the beach but still does not like the water although she has put her feet in the sea a couple of times now.

Q. What made you want to adopt an older dog?

Vanessa: To be truthful I did not bother about the age of the dog - what I really wanted was to help a needy dog and have company for my long walks by the sea. I was looking more at the face of the dog as I was going through the kennels at Battersea - I had told myself that it will be the dog that chose me and not vice versa and that's what really happened.

Q. What attracted you so particularly to Simba, what immediately caught your eye?

Vanessa : She was very shy, but as I stood in front of her box she was interested in me and popped her head round the corner to see if I was still there. When she finally came closer she had a very cute face - in fact I am sure she was smiling. That did it for me...

Q. How did Simba behave when you took him to your home for the first time?

Vanessa: When I got her into the car she was rather happy and put her head out of the window - much to the amusement of the other drivers as we sat in a traffic jam. Unfortunately the drive home took more than 3 hours due to the traffic and Simba did not enjoy this very much. When we finally reached home she was rather interested in everything but soon became very sad and she sat in the garden. So I took her for a walk and realised she was very frightened. The first week was very hard as she would not sleep at night and did not like to be left on her own when I left her at home - it was very hard for me and Simba. But I was very calm with her and had lots of patience until she became more confident. She is a happy dog now. She makes me laugh as she looks through the window when I go off to work in the morning (as if to say goodbye) and is at the window as soon as she hears my car door close when I return.

Q. Have you had much prior experience of dogs and if so, how well did Simba take to being with you compared to your previous experiences?

Vanessa: When I was a child I used to rescue puppies and kittens that had been left to die in the rubbish (I used to live in Italy) so I am used to animals from a young age. Simba has been great although it is hard sometimes as she is still rather anxious about different things and it is

difficult to understand when you do not have her full history! .

Q. Has language seemed to be a problem or did Simba adjust to English quickly?

Vanessa : Not at all. I speak to her in English and Italian and she does exactly what she is told. I think it is because she is rather intelligent. One thing she does and that I joke about is she loves eating seaweed so I tell myself she is missing sushi !

Q. Is Simba allowed anywhere in the house? You may know that a lot of dogs in Japan are kept outdoors only and seldom if ever go indoors.

Vanessa : Since her first arrival she has lived in the house. In fact she doesn't like to go out in the garden on her own.

Q. Where does Simba sleep? Is she allowed in your bedroom?

Vanessa : I first started her in the kitchen but she did not like that. She now sleeps in my bedroom by the side of my bed - She has a bed but she often sleeps on a little mat I have next to my bed and... she snores... When I work from home, she sleeps next to where I am working normally by my feet.

Q. What kind of diet is she on? I wonder how it compares with her old one.

Vanessa : I continued on her dry diet - however she loves some yoghurt in the evenings and she loves having treats (dried pig ears and beef...)... She will eat anything really.

Q. Do you already have a good, tactile relationship with her, does he demonstrate much affection yet?

Vanessa : I have a tactile relationship with her - she is not as affectionate as other dogs I have had in the past although I am sure she will change as time goes on - you just have to be patient. Every morning when we get up she comes up to me for a cuddle and a scratch under her chin (she loves this very much).

I wish you continuing happiness with your new friend.

Vanessa : Thank you! I just want to add something and that is that anyone looking at rehoming a dog should be prepared to put in a lot of time, effort and patience into helping the dog adjust and in some cases get over any trauma that s/he may have endured. This hard work will be worth it in the end you just have to have lots of patience ! look forward to receiving a copy of the article as my friends are all really interested in your story. I hope it will help other dogs in Japan ! Simba is a great dog and I would not want to change her !

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