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SCHOOL'S IN

Schools Away

Boarding could be the perfect answer, by Miki S. Noguchi



Boarding schools have long been depicted as places for building confidence while having a whole lot of fun.

Although Tokyo offers a lot of international school options to cover every stage of a child's education—from pre-school through senior high school—sometimes the best option for families is to send their children to a school back in their home country, or in another country, that may offer a more extensive and substantial education in their native language. Because of work commitments or younger children still in school in Japan, it's not always an option for families as a whole to move back to their home country together and so in those cases, sending children to a boarding school is often the most practical solution.

Some people have the impression that boarding school is some form of punishment for disobedient children or children from families lacking in love. However, based on the stories and opinions of one American girl I know who attended boarding school in Massachusetts, it seems that boarding school is an option that can be a much more fun and educational experience for the right student than the traditional path of attending school locally. This girl could not sing the praises more for the sense of independence and confidence that boarding and being educated away from the comfort zone of her family fostered in her. The friends she lived and studied with at boarding school continued to be some of her closest friends long after graduation.

If you are considering sending your child to boarding school in another country, here are some schools from around the globe that have been suggested by local Tokyo international schools:

United States:

Cate School (Carpinteria, California) A co-educational school of 265 boarding and day students, grades 9-12. Not surprising given its Southern California location, Cate School has a high level of diversity in ethnic backgrounds and countries of origin, with students of color representing more than 40% and international students making up 19% of the student body. The school offers 38 AP and honors classes. Located north of Los Angeles, near Santa Barbara, California.

Dana Hall (Wellesley, Massachusetts) A girls' school for grades 6-12 with nearly 500 boarding and day students. All-girl education has been lauded as a way for girls to feel more comfortable speaking up and for giving girls a supportive rather than competitive environment to thrive in. Dana Hall has a 117-year-long history of providing top-notch education and was originally designed as a "feeder school" for the nearby and prestigious women's university, Wellesley College.

Europe

Bedales School (Hampshire, England) Founded in 1893 (co-educational since 1898) the school is about an hour from London. The website describes its foundation "as a liberal alternative to the rigid and authoritarian regimes prevalent in independent

schools of the time." Situated on a 120-acre estate that includes a working farm and a strong performing arts program, Bedales offers an alternative to the traditional British boarding school format, encouraging a more casual, though still rigorous, academic environment.

St. Paul's School (London, England) An all-boys school founded over 500 years ago, originally located right next to the famous St. Paul's cathedral in London, but is now found more on the city's outskirts on the River Thames. The school has over 800 pupils who regularly continue on to university at Oxford, Cambridge, and American Ivy League schools. Most students are 'day' students, but there are still a fair number of 'boarders.' At just over \$10,000 a year, this is by far the least expensive of the schools on this list.

Ecole d'Humanité (Dorf, Switzerland) This school has been co-educational since its 1911 founding, which was certainly a radical concept at the time and gives you an idea of the school's tradition of independent thinking. Students live in 'family groups' of two faculty members and eight boys and girls. Offers Swiss (in German) and American (in English) diploma/education tracks, depending on where the student is likely to continue in their higher education. No grades are given; all merit is done by assessment.

No matter where or what type of school it is, be it more traditional or more new age, boarding school isn't cheap anywhere. Be prepared to pay upwards of US\$40,000 for tuition and board. Most of the programs charge additional fees for textbooks, personal expenses, and certain extra-curricular activities, such as equestrian lessons. Financial aid is available for nearly every school, but they are almost entirely need-based and usually all parents and stepparents must submit their financial records for a student to be considered for financial aid. Note that while most of these schools claim that about 15-20 percent of their student body is international, English as a second language classes are generally not available and the school expects students to arrive relatively fluent in English (or whatever the language of instruction is). Many of them require a TOEFL score to be submitted as part of the application packet for non-native English speaking students. **W**

Some other well-known US-based schools include the Philips Academy Andover in Andover, Massachusetts; Philips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire; the Kent School in Kent, Connecticut; and Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, Connecticut. In Europe, there is the International Bilingual School of Provence in Aix-en-Provence, France. In Australia, there is the St. Hilda's Anglican School for Girls in Mosman Park, Western Australia.

An interesting article on the boarding school experience from a Japanese student's perspective and other information about boarding schools in the US can be found at: www.admissionsquest.com.