

Published May 31st, 2017

## Orinda Academy: A small school that offers big adventures for its students

By Sora O'Doherty



Emma Greif, Orinda Academy Photo S. O'Doherty

Emma Greif enjoyed her "amazing" educational adventure in Japan just before spring break this year.

Greif is a sophomore at Orinda Academy, a small private high school. With just 100 students and about 10 full time teachers, Orinda Academy is celebrating its 35th year, sending approximately 87 percent of its graduates to four-year colleges. Some foreign students return home, some students attend two-year colleges, and some take a gap year after graduation.

In September, Orinda Academy students select their Educational Adventures class from a catalog of mini-courses planned by the faculty. Orinda Academy announces a foreign adventure that students can join the following spring. The early announcement allows students to pay on an installment basis, as well as to prepare for the coming visit to another country.

Greif and 13 other students visited Japan, accompanied by seven teachers and parents. The trip lasted 11 days. Students have other alternatives to the foreign trip, including adventures closer to home, learning yoga or doing volunteer work, for example, according to Janet Harrison, admissions director.

Greif gained a lot of cultural insight, she said. The group journeyed around Japan on buses and bullet trains. Greif was delighted by the amazing food, particularly enjoying fresh sushi and wasabi. She was surprised as how bright everything looked, streets and houses, even the advertisements are different, she said. She noticed a lot of animation, even in ads directed to adults. She was particularly impressed by the group's visit to Hiroshima. She expected the people to not be kind and welcoming, and found that instead the people of Hiroshima don't blame the United States or Japan. They blame the bombs, Greif said; "they took something horrendous and made it into hope."

Orinda Academy is located at 19 Altarinda Rd, Orinda. To reach it, call (925) 478-4504 or visit [www.orindaacademy.org](http://www.orindaacademy.org).

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