

The image shows a scenic view of the Ojai Valley School Lower Campus. In the foreground, there is a large, well-maintained green lawn. In the middle ground, a white building with a green roof and green awnings is visible. To the left, there is a covered outdoor seating area with picnic tables and umbrellas. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

OJAI VALLEY SCHOOL

VIEWBOOK
LOWER CAMPUS



Fifth Grade team building on the ropes course

EXPERIENCE YOUR EDUCATION

Deep in the embrace of the Ojai Valley is an extraordinary place where children come to live and learn – a place that nurtures, challenges and awakens a thirst for knowledge and new experiences. It is a place where children develop their intellectual curiosity and form the academic and critical thinking skills to be successful in high school, college, and beyond.

As you walk around the Lower Campus, grades Pre-Kindergarten to Eight, take a minute to look and listen. You will see children engaged in small classes taught by knowledgeable and caring teachers. You will hear the laughter of students who find joy in their daily experiences inside and outside the classroom. And you will feel the sense of community and belonging that makes this place special.

Step inside the historic woodshop and you will see the “hand work” that sets OVS apart. It was this emphasis on experiential learning, taught alongside the “head work” of history, literature, mathematics, music and art, that established OVS as a progressive child-centered school more than a century ago. Stop by the stables and watch children demonstrating kindness and responsibility in their care for our horses and barnyard animals. And visit the dorms to discover a truly global community of residents from around the world.

At OVS, we set high expectations for our students but link them with firm guidance, support, and encouragement. We celebrate our differences and insist that every person be treated with dignity and respect. Along the way, OVS students use the environment around Ojai, and California, as an extended classroom for their academic studies and co-curricular exploration.

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“For many graduates, including myself, some of our most influential mentors, even to this day, are people from our times at the Lower Campus. Through my time in Middle School I was able to find my voice and use my self-advocacy skills to become the person I am today.”

CatieJo Larkin (L18, U22)
Smith College





Kayaking at Santa Cruz Island

W E L C O M E TO O V S

Ojai Valley School offers a distinctive place for learning — a coeducational, boarding and day school serving students from Pre-Kindergarten through High School — on two campuses in the beautiful Ojai Valley. It is a home-away-from-home for students from around the world, and a tight-knit community as evidenced by the warm greetings teachers and students exchange and the life-long friendships they form.

Academically, the curriculum provides an intellectually challenging experience for students across the grade levels. They learn to participate, to be respectful, to work both collaboratively and independently, to love challenges, to reach beyond limits, to strive for excellence, to try again if they fail and, ultimately, to value themselves.

OVS founder Edward Yeomans spoke to one of the central differentiators of an OVS education when he said, “The truth of every subject taught is the emotions and the music at the center of it; and the fact of life is that we miss it all if we miss the joy.” We hope that all our students will find the connections, the community, and the animating activities beyond the classroom which are so uniquely OVS and which keep emotions and music at the center of school life. As Yeomans so aptly said a century ago, let’s make sure they don’t “miss the joy” in the process!

We hope that after reading this viewbook you will want to visit and see for yourself the energy, spirit and love of learning that thrives at Ojai Valley School.



OVS students painting, circa 1930

HISTORY AND TRADITION

In the early part of the 20th century, a distinguished Eastern couple settled in the beautiful Ojai Valley and opened a small private school. Little did they know it would be flourishing more than 110 years later.

Edward Yeomans, a Chicagoan educated at Phillips Academy and Princeton University, had written a series of articles in the Atlantic Monthly on the need for educational reform. The articles caught the eye of a prominent businessman, Frank Frost, who persuaded Yeomans to move to Ojai and create a school that would embody his very modern ideas. At the core of Yeomans' beliefs was the concept that children learn best through experience. Yeomans considered his own education to have been dull and stifling, and wanted to establish a school that would emphasize experiential learning and a love for the outdoors. He envisioned a place where music, art and woodshop would be taught alongside math, history, and languages. Yeomans declared that "Integer Vitae" – meaning the wholeness of life, symmetry of life, soundness of life, and, therefore poise and strength of life – would become the school's motto and philosophy.

Today, the breadth of learning experiences offered at OVS is Yeomans' legacy. The school has grown from a one-room classroom serving 12 pupils to a boarding and day school on two campuses for more than 300 students in Pre-Kindergarten to 12th Grade. But its values, spirit and pursuit of joy remain the same.

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"I have had the experience of seeing OVS from the perspective of a student and now a parent. I am confident the school will continue to grow and improve, adding new classes and buildings. But one thing that I can assure you will not change is that it will always feel like home."

James Casey (L95)
Parent of Jackson, grade 4, and Kendall, grade 6
Member of OVS Board of Trustees





ACADEMICS

Whether entering in the Primary, Elementary or Middle School grades, your child will find an academic program that is engaging and ignites a love of learning. In the Primary grades, your child will develop social and academic skills, self-reliance and community awareness. This is accomplished in small classes, averaging about 12 students, where skilled teachers focus on individual needs. Even in these early grades, your child will develop math, reading and writing skills and be introduced to music, art, woodshop, Spanish, equestrian, physical education and outdoor education. As your child moves on to the Elementary grades, the program focuses more intently on these core subjects as well as science, social studies and technology.

In Middle School, Grades 6-8, the curriculum becomes more challenging. Students are presented with an integrated course of study in math, science, technology, and engineering. They develop solid writing, research, and reading skills through a literature-based curriculum in language arts and social science. They also study Spanish and enjoy co-curricular classes in fine and performing arts.

Threaded throughout the curriculum are hands-on learning experiences designed to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. In Sixth Grade, for example, students venture outside the classroom for a series of field-study trips to observe and analyze the local watershed, starting in mountains north of Ojai all the way down to the river estuary in Ventura. In Eighth Grade, students travel with their class to Washington, D.C., to gain a fresh perspective on United States history and government. Whether deconstructing Shakespeare, building skateboards in woodshop or leading an All-School assembly, students are given numerous opportunities for independence and personal growth.

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At Ojai Valley School, we strive to educate the whole child by balancing intellect with empathy, curiosity with creativity, and knowledge with character — preparing them not just for tests, but for life.

Nicole Ferro (L96)
First Grade Teacher, Director of Primary and Elementary





Dorm parents form tight bonds with residents

RESIDENT LIFE

As a boarding student, your child will quickly come to consider Ojai Valley School a second home, a place where lasting friendships are forged. OVS offers the only boarding program on the West Coast for students in Grades 3-8. The school offers both 5-day and 7-day boarding options. There are various reasons this could be the right fit for your family. If you live outside the United States, you might want to immerse your child in a new culture and a school with extensive experience in developing English-language proficiency. If you live in Southern California, you might opt for a 5-day program so your child can benefit from the structure and academic support provided in a boarding program while still being able to come home on weekends. Whatever your reason, the boarding program provides warm and caring partners in parenting your child.

Over the course of the school year, our dorm parents will help your child develop a sense of responsibility, leadership and respect for others. We believe these values are vital in developing a strong school community. To that end, our dorm parents focus on teaching integrity, conflict resolution, and appropriate use of technology. They also emphasize the importance of developing healthy friendships – and having fun.

During the week, resident students play outside after school, take music lessons, ride bikes or skateboards on campus, or relax in the dorms before completing their homework during evening Study Hall. Boarding students enjoy casual meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the dining hall, as well as formal Dress Dinners intended to build community and teach proper etiquette. On the weekends, there are planned trips and activities, sometimes as simple as a walk to downtown Ojai for ice cream, as well as adventures at Disneyland or Universal Studios.

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The OVS boarding program provides a place where students grow academically and socially. They are encouraged to try new activities and applauded as they push themselves towards excellence. Their growing confidence positions them well for a seamless transition to the OVS high school program.”

Michelle Gross
Lower Campus Dorm Parent





Elementary production of "Don Quixote"

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Ojai Valley School's founding father Ed Yeomans once observed that some people believe you can get by without the arts. He also observed that you could get by being color blind, but you would miss much of the richness and beauty of nature. It is that belief – that a life without the arts misses much of life's richness and beauty – that drives the Visual and Performing Arts Program at Ojai Valley School.

At OVS, your child will be introduced to music, fine arts, drama and woodshop as early as Pre-Kindergarten. Continuing on to the Elementary grades, your child will study a wide range of drawing and painting techniques, learn to sing and play an instrument, and carve, cut and hammer a range of hands-on projects in the historic woodshop.

Across the grade levels, students are encouraged to participate in stage productions in our 480-seat Greenberg Activities Center, where the entire student body meets for twice-weekly assemblies as well as music recitals and special events. There are opportunities for all students to be involved, whether running the sound and lights from the tech booth, performing on stage, or helping to build the sets and costumes.









ATHLETICS

At Ojai Valley School, we emphasize the importance of physical fitness as part of living a healthy balanced lifestyle, and we provide opportunities for participation in sports to encourage teamwork, resilience and leadership.

In the Primary and lower Elementary grades, physical education classes focus on developing motor skills and coordination in a non-competitive setting, while encouraging children to form positive attitudes about themselves and physical fitness. Beginning in the upper Elementary grades, children begin to play intramural games and can opt to participate in either P.E. or Equestrian. In Middle School, children have the opportunity to play interscholastic sports, including soccer, volleyball, and basketball. Swimming and tennis are also offered as part of the P.E. curriculum.

The Lower Campus facilities include a beautiful pool, tennis and basketball courts, athletic fields, and playgrounds that are used throughout the week by day and boarding students. Our goal is to give children the opportunity to find athletic pursuits that they will enjoy and awaken in them an appreciation for physical fitness that will be with them throughout their lives.





Rock Climbing in Los Padres National Forest

OUTDOORS

Perhaps no program better typifies the community spirit and character-building philosophy of Ojai Valley School than Outdoor Education. Driven by a belief that every moment is a teaching moment, the Outdoor Program teaches students self-reliance, teamwork, and perseverance. Beyond those skills, we want our students to develop a deep appreciation for the natural world, and learn how to preserve and restore our fragile environment.

The Outdoor Program begins in Pre-Kindergarten when children take their first hikes on the Ojai Meadows Preserve. In the Elementary grades, children begin to camp overnight, first with one night on campus and building up to three nights on trips to regional beaches and campgrounds. The program becomes more advanced in Middle School when students are introduced to multi-day backpacking and camping trips, as well as opportunities to participate in weekend excursions and adventure sports such as mountaineering, kayaking, surfing, rock climbing, river rafting, and mountain biking. Destinations typically include the Channel Islands National Park, Los Padres National Forest, trails in the Eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains, and numerous Southern California beaches.

Because we believe that Outdoor Education is essential to our mission to develop balanced, well-rounded people, full participation in this program is mandatory for all students, and most jump at the opportunity to do more trips throughout the school year. Alumni often say it was the lessons learned on these trips that they remember most from their OVS experience, including cooking over a campfire, reaching the summit of a mountain peak – and always being dirty! These experiences are fundamental to developing a lifelong love for the outdoors, and a commitment to protecting our natural world.

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At OVS, I discovered a passion for the environment and I am now pursuing a degree with an emphasis in ocean studies. Without being exposed to the outdoors, and the importance of conservation throughout my time at OVS, I might never have realized the cause that I want to dedicate my life to.”

Avery Colborn (L16, U20)
UC Santa Barbara





EQUESTRIAN

Ojai Valley School is known throughout the region for its riding program, which is designed for both beginners and advanced equestrians. Working with horses requires patience, sensitivity, persistence and good judgment – qualities OVS strives to instill in all its students. These goals are interwoven into the Equestrian Program as children, starting in Pre-Kindergarten, learn the basics of how to groom and care for animals in their Animal Science classes. As students advance through the Elementary and Middle School grades, they have the opportunity to compete as part of a school team.

Ojai Valley School students in grades 3-12 compete in local, regional, and national competitions, including the IEA National Championships the past two years. The school owns many horses, and students are encouraged to ride different ones throughout the year as each mount teaches something new. Students can also board their own horses during the school year.

The aim of the Equestrian Program is to teach self-confidence, responsibility, maturity and an interest in horse sports. Students also have the opportunity to participate in Middle School horse camping trips and trail rides. Some students achieve basic skills and ride only for recreation, while others choose to participate in dressage and jumping shows or clinics with guest instructors.





SAN FRANCISCO

YOSEMITE

SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS

DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

BIG SUR

Ojai

LOS ANGELES

CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK

PERFECTLY PLACED

Ojai Valley School is ideally situated to take advantage of the best California has to offer — whether it's adventures in the big city or the local backcountry. Surrounded by the stunning Los Padres National Forest, OVS is also just a 90-minute drive to Los Angeles, and students here get the benefit of it all.

People travel from across the globe to visit places that are right in our backyard. Less than an hour from campus, your student may enjoy rock climbing in the rugged Sespe Wilderness, boogie boarding in the Pacific Ocean, or kayaking at the Channel Islands National Park. Weekend adventures may find students enjoying karaoke contests with friends on campus, or taking selfies with Mickey Mouse at Disneyland.

In both our fall and summer programs, students from around the world come to Ojai Valley School for these enriching experiences!



Seventh Grade fall camping on the Big Sur coastline



**OJAI
VALLEY
SCHOOL**

OJAI VALLEY SCHOOL, LOWER CAMPUS

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