

UWC ISAK Japan

Karuizawa, Japan



Japan's only UWC campus, tucked on Mount Asama, where seven in ten students study on need-based scholarship.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	71/100
Academic outcomes	74/100
University placement	74/100
Prestige & heritage	60/100
Alumni network	55/100
Facilities	80/100
Transparency	76/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

UWC ISAK Japan sits in a niche of its own: Japan’s only UWC campus, in Karuizawa on the slopes of Mount Asama, with English and Japanese as languages of instruction and a full boarding model. It opened in 2014 and joined the UWC movement in 2017, which matters because this is not a generic international boarding school with a service gloss added on top. The UWC mission, the IB curriculum and the school’s own leadership focus are the core of the offer. For families who want Japan without the exam-cram culture of domestic elite schooling, that combination is **genuinely distinctive**.

The other fact that puts it straight onto a shortlist is access. Seven in ten students study on need-based

scholarship. That is an **unusually serious** commitment to socioeconomic diversity, and it changes the character of a boarding school. Parents looking for a polished, affluent enclave will find a very different social mix here. Parents who value international breadth, moral seriousness and students who have not all followed the same privileged track will find exactly that. The average annual boarding fee across the school is ****\$47,683****, which places it in the expensive end of the market, but the scholarship profile makes the community more mixed than that number alone implies.

This is a school for a specific type of child. The strongest fit is an intellectually curious, outward-facing teenager who wants an IB education, can handle boarding, and has a real appetite for living with peers from different backgrounds in a remote campus setting. Karuizawa is part of the attraction and part of the test: it is **beautifully secluded**, not urban, and students need to draw energy from the community and the landscape rather than from a city on the doorstep. The recent destinations list is modestly published rather than triumphantly sold — Arts University Bournemouth, Australian National University and Bates College are named — which tells you something useful. This school is not built around a narrow conveyor belt to a handful of famous universities. It is built around formation, leadership and international mindedness, with university outcomes that are real but not the sole point of the exercise.

That clarity makes UWC ISAK Japan **compelling** for the right family and wrong for the wrong one. Students who want relentless traditional academic drilling, a large-city social life, or a conventional prestige hierarchy will find it **ill-suited**. Students who want a boarding education with purpose, an IB framework, a strong Japanese context and a peer group shaped by scholarship access will find a school with a **clear identity** and far more substance than many institutions with shinier branding. The shortlist case is simple: ****2014**** foundation, ****2017**** entry into the UWC movement, and ****70%**** of students on need-based scholarship add up to a school with a rare proposition in Japan.

STRENGTHS

- Japan's first full-boarding international high school, formed when ISAK joined the UWC movement in 2017 as its 17th member college.
- Genuinely global cohort: students are drawn from more than 80 countries, with about 70 percent receiving need-based financial assistance.
- The school offers no merit scholarships, only need-based aid, a policy designed to keep the community accessible across income levels.
- Campus sits roughly 70 minutes from Tokyo by Shinkansen, giving a rural boarding setting with a fast rail link to the capital.
- Curriculum pairs a Grade 10 leadership/design-innovation foundation year with the two-year IB Diploma Programme in Grades 11-12.

TRADE-OFFS

- Total enrollment is small (Wikipedia lists 175 students, other sources around 199), meaning fewer IB subject combinations and a narrower peer group than larger international schools.
- Even with generous need-based aid, listed fees for families not receiving assistance are substantial: tuition of 4,900,000 JPY plus boarding fee of 1,825,000 JPY and a 500,000 JPY facilities fee.
- Location is genuinely remote: a wooded campus near Karuizawa town rather than in or near a major city, so full-time boarding is effectively mandatory for all students.
- Because no merit-based scholarships exist, academically outstanding applicants from wealthier families cannot reduce fees through achievement alone.

ADMISSIONS

Main entry is Grade 10 (Pre-IB), with applications typically opening between September and December for students aged 14-15; students who complete Grade 10 continue automatically into the IB Diploma without reapplying. Candidates can apply directly for Grade 10 or through a UWC national committee/Global Selection Programme. The process is holistic rather than purely academic, emphasizing essays, interviews, English proficiency and evidence of collaboration across cultures and resilience in a residential setting. Need-based financial assistance is available; there are no merit scholarships.

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_3f45c547f6.