

## **Lily Maxwell – Madrid, Easter 2014**

During the week building up to Easter 2014, named by the Spanish 'Semana Santa', I visited Madrid for 6 days in order to take language lessons. Studying Spanish as an Ab Initio language at Cambridge meant that I had to go to Spain before my exams in order to improve my ability to speak and understand the language, and through the lessons consolidate my knowledge of Spanish grammar and widen my vocabulary. My lessons lasted for 4 days, from Monday to Thursday, and then on Friday and Saturday I was able to explore the city and see some of its amazing architecture, culture and history. I also stayed with a Spanish family, which really helped to improve my oral skills as I was forced to speak the language all the time around the house. Not only did the week improve my language skills but it also confirmed my love of Spanish and further expanded my interest in learning more about the history, culture and people of Spain and Latin America. This trip has spurred me to want to go to Madrid for part of my year abroad and to explore other parts of Spain during that year, and in general, in order to get to know the other culture-rich areas of Spain.

I also happened to meet a group of French students studying at my language school during the week and so I was able to practise my French as well, much to my delight. Meeting people of all ages who spoke many different languages was fantastic and definitely widened my interests in parts of the world I have never really considered before. Furthermore, the people I met, particularly those from France and Spain, will serve as valuable contacts for organising my year abroad and given how lovely they were, I hope to be able to visit them in the future, allowing me to continue practising my languages as much as possible. This trip ended up being productive for both of my languages and I truly feel that it has improved my proficiency in both, giving me incentive to perhaps repeat this kind of immersed study in the future.