

MAGDALENE COLLEGE

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GUIDE



Your guide from students to what Magdalene is REALLY like

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DISCLAIMER

This publication has been produced by students for prospective students. While supported by the Junior Combination Room and Magdalene College, it reflects personal views and experiences and should not be taken as an official guide to College practice or policy. Information may change so please always refer to the official Magdalene College and University websites for the most up-to-date information. Quotations from students are their personal views only, and are not to be taken as official College policy.

- The following accounts were written by current students and reflect their own experiences during the 2024–25 academic year.
- Every student's timetable, accommodation and activities will differ from year to year and from course to course.
- Facilities, experiences, prices, and teaching arrangements may change for future years.
- These pieces are intended to give an indicative sense of life at the College, not to promise or guarantee a particular experience.
- For the most up-to-date information on courses, accommodation and fees, please refer to the official College and University websites.
- This is not an extensive guide to all aspects, charges and requirements involved in membership of Magdalene College or the University of Cambridge. For more information, please refer to the website.

Date of review by College: January 2026

WELCOME!

Welcome to Magdalene's Student Guide! We are Karen and Georgi, the producers of this publication. We are both final year students in the 2025-26 academic year.

This guide provides everyone with an opportunity to learn about life at Magdalene from the perspective of undergraduate students who were studying at Magdalene at the time of writing. It aims to reach those who may not typically have access to this information.

If you have any further questions please see the contact details for the College at the end of this guide. We hope you enjoy reading this guide and learn more about why we enjoy studying at Magdalene!

INTRODUCTION

We have created this guide to give prospective students an idea of what life is like from current undergraduate students' perspectives.

Magdalene is one of the 29 undergraduate Colleges that make up the University of Cambridge. As a Cambridge student, you are a member of both the University and a College. Your College is a community hub which includes your accommodation, catering services, sports and societies. It becomes your home.

This guide will tell you all about life at Magdalene, what a day studying your degree may look like, the opportunities you have whilst studying here and the support available if needed. This will vary depending on which College you apply to.

INTRODUCTION CONT.

We have collated the experiences of a range of our undergraduate students to show what living and studying at Magdalene is like. We hope this helps you to choose a college - after all, it wasn't that long ago that we were in your position!

We've worked hard to produce this and we hope it helps to show why we all love Magdalene.

Having been through the application process ourselves, we know that there are some myths about Cambridge.

We hope this guide shows you what Magdalene is REALLY like from students' perspectives!



BENSON COURT

K staircase -
HEAD PORTER

F staircase -
HEALTH CENTRE

A staircase -
ACADEMIC
OFFICE

BENSON HALL
OLD LODGE ↓
ICR

FIRST COURT

C staircase -
BURSARY

F staircase -
MCR
FELLOWS' GUEST
ROOM

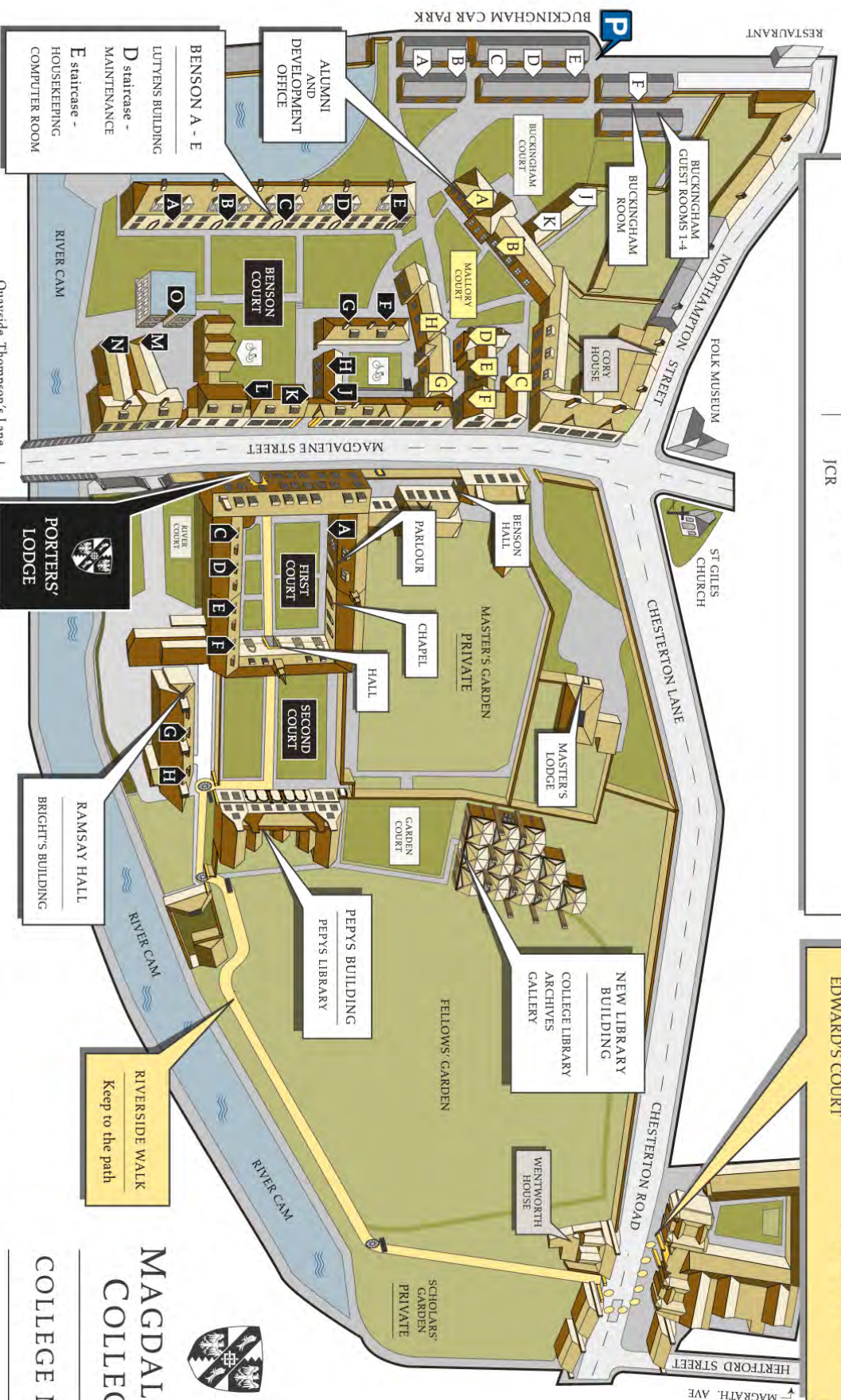
COLLEGE OFFICE
COLLEGE BAR A&B

SEMINAR ROOMS 1 - 5
THE SIR HUMPHREY CRIPPS
THEATRE
DENIS MURPHY GALLERY
CONFERENCE & EVENTS
OFFICE

EDWARD'S COURT

CRIPPS COURT

PORTERS' LODGE



**MAGDALENE
COLLEGE**

COLLEGE MAP

Quayside, Thompson's Lane
and City Centre ↑

WHY MAGDALENE?

Magdalene is one of the oldest and smallest colleges. We have around 350 undergraduate students, equating to about 105 students in a year.

We are a welcoming and friendly community.

The College currently offers all undergraduate subjects taught by the University, so you will get to meet a variety of people. In recent years, there has been a roughly equal split between arts/humanities and science students.

The College is located in central Cambridge so many of the things you need are a close walk away. Some examples include:

- Cafe: 2 minutes
- Jesus Green (park): 4 minutes
- Supermarket: 7 minutes
- Nightclub: 11 minutes

OUR LIBRARIES

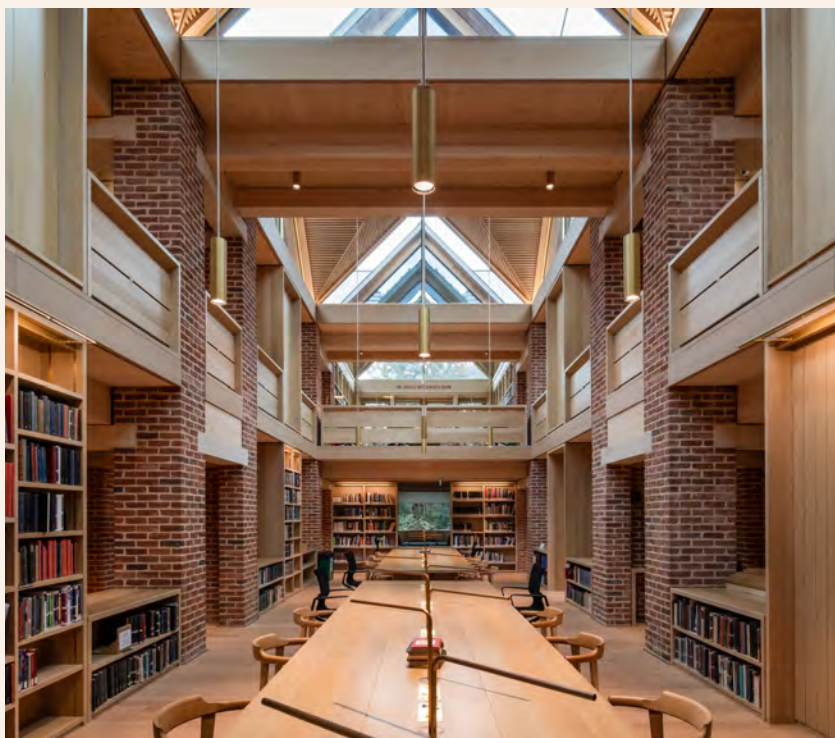
‘The BEST in
Cambridge.’
~ Dev, UG
Student

NEW LIBRARY

The New Library, opened in 2021, is a lovely, bright study space with plenty of room to accommodate students.

It also hosts exhibitions and has a social space which has a kitchenette with a hot water tap, tea and coffee facilities and a fruit basket.

In recent years, our welfare team have provided free tea and cake on Wednesday afternoons at ‘Tea at 3’. It’s a mid-week refresh where you can catch up with friends and meet new people.



David Valinsky Photography

PEPYS LIBRARY

A 17th-century alumnus of Magdalene, Samuel Pepys, is best known for his diaries documenting the Restoration, Great Plague and Great Fire of London. He donated his original diaries to this College.

The collection is held in the Pepys Library, located in Second Court. Special tours for students are sometimes organised by the librarians.

Students also have access to Faculty Libraries and the University Library. For more information please visit this site:

<https://www.libraries.cam.ac.uk>



Magdalene College

WHAT DO THESE CAMBRIDGE TERMS MEAN?

Director of Studies - a member of academic staff (often a Doctor or Professor in your subject) who looks after your academic experience at Cambridge. They oversee your supervisors and meet with you to discuss your progress.

Fellow - an academic associated with a college.

Formal - an optional three course dinner served to you whilst you catch up with friends in Hall. Magdalene is one of the only colleges with a formal hall that is purely candlelit.

Gown - a long black robe worn to formal, Matriculation and Chapel services. Each college's gown is of a particular design and colour.

Gyp - a kitchen within your accommodation.



Magdalene College

JCR - Junior Combination Room. This is a social space for undergraduates to convene and watch TV or play video games. The JCR is a student committee who represent our undergraduates' views and advocate for students during meetings with College staff.

Matriculation - the day you are officially enrolled in our College! The day begins with a year group photo, usually in front of the Pepys Library, and ends with a formal dinner in our candlelit hall.

Pidge - your pigeon hole, found in the Porters' Lodge. This is where your post is left.

Plodge - our Porters' Lodge is situated in First Court. Our friendly Porters are available 24/7 and can help with anything, from needing a plaster to having locked yourself out of your room.

Ramsay - our canteen. Students can eat here seven days a week, with a special brunch being offered on the weekends!

Supervisions - time with doctoral students, lecturers, Professors or other experts where you can discuss your work and be given support.

ACCOMMODATION

Magdalene seeks to provide accommodation for all years of an undergraduate course. Much of Magdalene's accommodation is on site, with the remaining housing no more than five minutes from College. We have a range of rooms, some with en-suite, some with river views and some with 'sets' - meaning you can have a separate bedroom and study room. Accommodation blocks commonly have kitchens with hobs, a kettle, toaster, sink and cupboards for storage. A few houses have ovens, but this is infrequent at Magdalene and most other colleges.

The rooms are each allocated a rent band which designates a price to the room, depending on its size and features. In the 2025-26 academic year we have rent bands A-K ranging between £243.74 and £143.92 a week respectively. Students pay for 10 weeks of accommodation for each of the three terms. You are made aware of the rent band when choosing a room, helping students to choose a room which fits their budget.



Magdalene College

FOOD

FORMALS

Formals are optional three course meals in the formal dining hall, pictured below. We are one of the few colleges that have a completely candlelit hall which adds to the special atmosphere. It costs £11.65 (2024/25) for the evening. You can invite guests from other colleges or any friends and family from home, up to a set number and for an additional cost. The dress code is smart; as a College member you wear your gown on top, which you will purchase when you join the College.



Magdalene College

Sample Formal Menu - President's Dinner 2024

Starter:

Pan seared scallops on an edible sand of seaweed, capers and panko, Granny Smith apple, scallop roe powder with sea fennel and dill oil

Mains:

Chargrilled chicken fillet with mushroom risotto, fried leeks and tomato caper compote

OR

Chargrilled tofu steak with mushroom risotto, fried leeks and tomato caper compote

Dessert:

Roasted hazelnut chocolate fondant, vanilla bean ice cream laced with raspberry coulis in an almond tuille basket



Wayne Johnson



Wayne Johnson

RAMSAY

As well as cooking for yourself, you can visit Ramsay, our general cafeteria, which is open 7 days a week. Lunch and dinner are served during the week and brunch and dinner is offered on weekends. Food is provided at a subsidised rate, with a meal costing between £3 and £6 in 2024-25. A cheaper option is also often available. Brunch is often cheaper and there are meal deals available during the week. The kitchen team cater for all dietary requirements, including vegetarian and vegan options which are available every day.

See a sample 2024-25 menu from Ramsay on the next page.



Georgi



Georgi

Wednesday Lunch (12:00-13:30)

Spicy Bean Burger (Mayonnaise, Sliced Cheese and Tomato) £3.15

Cuban Chimichurri Chicken Burger (Mayonnaise, Sliced Cheese and Tomato) £3.15

Curly Fries £0.77

Asian Slaw £0.77

Onion Rings £0.77

Warm Chocolate Brownie with Cream £1.50

Wednesday Dinner (18:00-19:15)

Oven Baked Bass Fillet with Cherry Tomato Pesto Ragout Sauce £3.15

Quinoa, Spinach and Chickpea Stuffed Aubergine with Cherry Tomato Pesto Ragout Sauce £3.15

Braised Fennel and Leek £0.77

Broccoli £0.77

Ginger, Apple and Rhubarb Crumble with Custard £1.50



CLUBS AND SOCIETIES 2024-25 (SOME OF THE MANY)

‘We are the College climbing society, running weekly bouldering meets at the climbing wall in Kelsey Kerridge Sports Centre. It's a nice place to meet fellow Magdalene students and try out climbing, no matter your skill.’

~ Nat, UG Student

‘The Jazz Disciples are Magdalene's very own jazz band! We have relaxed, weekly rehearsals and multiple paid performances each term including College bar nights and great live music venues like The Portland Arms. It's a great way to meet new people across all year groups and play jazz, funk and soul together.’

~ Bethan, UG Student

‘The badminton club caters for players at every level. We hold weekly sessions ranging from casual play to rigorous squad training. Whether you want to bring your friends and get some fun exercise or compete at the highest level, we have everything you could need. Our first team has recently been promoted to Division 3 and we're now striving for another promotion. Preparations are also underway to launch a women's team and a second team very soon!’

~ Tom, UG Student

‘At Magdalene College Football, we train once a week on Wednesday nights at St John’s pitches. We play one match, usually every weekend, against other colleges in our division or in the cup. These all take place in Cambridge, either at St John’s pitches (our home ground) or the opposition’s sports ground. Everyone’s welcome to play! We’re currently in the process of making a second team.’

~ Isaac, UG Student

'I'm a cox for Magdalene Boat Club. Our weekday outings occur in the mornings, before 9am, so everyone can get to their lectures in time. The cox steers the boat and tells the rowers what to do. It's an important job and my favourite part is that I don't have to do any exercise. I layer up and deck myself out in waterproofs (it can get quite cold sitting stationary in a boat) and then get to go and shout at a bunch of people! I had never coxed before coming to university and gave it a go because I'm a bit of an adrenaline junkie and subsequently got hooked.'

~ Grace, UG Student

The 1988 Club is Magdalene College's feminist society, run by the JCR women's officer. We hold events including mug painting, movie nights, charity bake sales and collaborative art sessions. For International Women's Day we host a formal, followed by a College bar event.

Our sessions are welcoming and inclusive, helping us to sustain intersectional feminism within college.

We have a website attached to the 1988 Instagram account, which provides a platform for women of the College to share their creative work. Additionally, the website shares many informative resources.

~ Grace, UG Student

WELFARE

The Health and Wellbeing Service is dedicated to supporting the wellbeing of students. They currently provide a comprehensive wellbeing programme.

Students can come to the service with any issue, whether it is mental health, physical health, disability related or anything else.

They currently offer freshers' appointments which are brief check-ins used to understand individual needs, discuss mental health and counselling options and agree a plan moving forward. Wellbeing appointments are available for mental health advice, support or just a listening ear for all manner of emotional, personal or mental health concerns. They also currently provide physical health appointments for assessment and support for minor injuries and illnesses.

'We have a range of fun and relaxing free weekly events such as yoga and felting workshops. We have had visits from owls and dogs during our Tea at 3 events. This is where you can gorge on chocolate fudge cake, sip on fancy green tea, pet the College dog and remark, as always, how adorable she is.'

~ Sophia, UG Student

FAITH

The Chapel is a welcoming community for those of any faith. It serves as a reminder of the spiritual dimension of our lives today as well as the College's Benedictine foundation. Worship is in the Anglican tradition and includes Sunday morning Communion services and sung services, like Evensong and Compline. Anyone is welcome to attend.



Georgi

The College's Dean of Chapel is Sarah. Sarah is responsible for organising worship in College whilst also supporting the wellbeing of all students, regardless of their beliefs. She is available for chats and cups of tea on many days of the week! Sarah's office used to belong to CS Lewis (author of The Chronicles of Narnia). His chair remains there today and students are welcome to sit in it!

Sarah is always happy to discuss the range of ways to get involved with different faiths both within the College and the city. At Magdalene, there is also a multi-faith prayer room.



Karen

ACADEMIC AND PASTORAL SUPPORT

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Academic support comes in the form of a Director of Studies (DoS) who is an integral part of your academic journey. Your DoS is there to help with any queries you have during your time as a student. You are able to get in touch with them at any point. You can also contact your Faculty if you need further support. In addition to your DoS, we have a Royal Literary Fund Fellow who is available to help you develop your writing skills.

PASTORAL SUPPORT

Tutors are here for your pastoral care. They are an academic who is not affiliated with your subject. You are welcome to get in touch with them if you need support during the term. You meet with them at the end of every term to tell them about how things are going. Every Tutor will have office hours each week which you can attend.

DAY IN THE LIFE: ENGLISH

WITH THANKS TO CELESTE

09:00: Wake up and get ready

10:00: Lectures at Sidgwick Site

12:00: Walk back to accommodation and eat lunch

13:30: Study in room or go to the library, taking multiple breaks

16:00: Supervision

17:00: Social event (e.g. coffee with a friend)

18:30: Dinner - normally in Ramsay with friends

19:30: Study time

20:30: Societies (e.g. poetry club or seeing friends)

21:30: Study

23:30: Chill in my room and go to bed



Murder on the Orient Express at Cambridge Arts Theatre

DAY IN THE LIFE: MML

WITH THANKS TO DEV, MADELEINE AND NAOMI

07:20: Run with Cambridge University Hare and Hounds

08:30: Breakfast

10:00: Lecture (e.g. Portuguese grammar class or a film seminar)

11:00: Library to read texts from set reading list or write essay (1500 words a week)

12:15-13:00: Lunch at Ark Cafe on Sidgwick Site or MML cafe

13:00: Supervision (e.g. for Latin American literature paper)

14:00: Lecture (e.g. Brazilian Romanticism)

16:00: Study in Magdalene Library

18:30: Dinner in Ramsay or cook in kitchen

20:00: Social time (e.g. College bar, pub, movie, chess club or debate at the Cambridge Union)

22:30 onwards: Bed



Karen

DAY IN THE LIFE: ENGINEERING

WITH THANKS TO THEO

06:00: Alarm for rowing (outings up to four times a week)

06:30: Push off (rowing outing begins)

08:30: Cycle back to accommodation

09:00: First lecture (four modules in first year, eight in second and ten in third. Current modules are fluid mechanics, economics, design engineering, materials science and structures)

10:00: Second lecture or coffee break

11:00: Lab practical, break or more lectures (full write-ups required for lab practicals, up to 5 per term)

13:00: Lunch (five to ten minute cycle back to College)

14:00: Library (e.g. lecture notes, practice questions, lab report work, internship applications)

18:00: Cook dinner or attend supervision

20:00: Library, pub, gym or free time

‘Four of my modules have a supervision every second week on the example paper questions.’

~ Theo, UG Student

DAY IN THE LIFE: NATURAL SCIENCES

WITH THANKS TO ISAAC AND ELEANOR

09:00: Lecture - Chemistry B (structures and reactions - organic and inorganic chemistry)

10:00: Lecture - Material Science

11:00: Break, often spent going over notes in a group in the Chemistry department cafe

12:00: Lecture - Chemistry A (mathematical theories behind chemical bonding, structures and reactions)

13:00-13:45: Lunch

13:45-18:00: A practical lab session (e.g. preparation of paracetamol)

18:00: Dinner in Ramsay

19:00 onwards: Work for supervisions or lab write-ups, clubs and societies (e.g. football practice)

‘As captain, part of my week is spent organising the football fixtures with other colleges and booking referees/pitches. I still find time to socialise at night, often playing games in social spaces.’

~ Isaac, UG Student

‘NatSci at Cambridge is very intense and you’ll be expected to put lots of work in. The most important thing is to ask for help if you need it because there are lots of people who can support you.’

~ Eleanor, UG Student

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Cambridge Bursary: In 2024-25, the Cambridge Bursary provided free financial support of up to £3,500 a year for certain full-time undergraduate students paying Home fees, to help with Cambridge fees or living costs. UK students with a household income under £62,215 per year may currently be eligible for some support.

Magdalene Bursary: If you are entitled to the full Cambridge Bursary, Magdalene will add a further College Bursary, currently on a sliding scale of up to £2,000 per year. As it is a bursary, it is also non-repayable.

You can visit the University and College websites to find out more.



Karen

Magdalene also offer a range of grants for study, travel, music and research opportunities. In the past, these have included the chance to travel to countries such as the USA or Italy!



Karen



Celeste

PHOTOS OF CAMBRIDGE



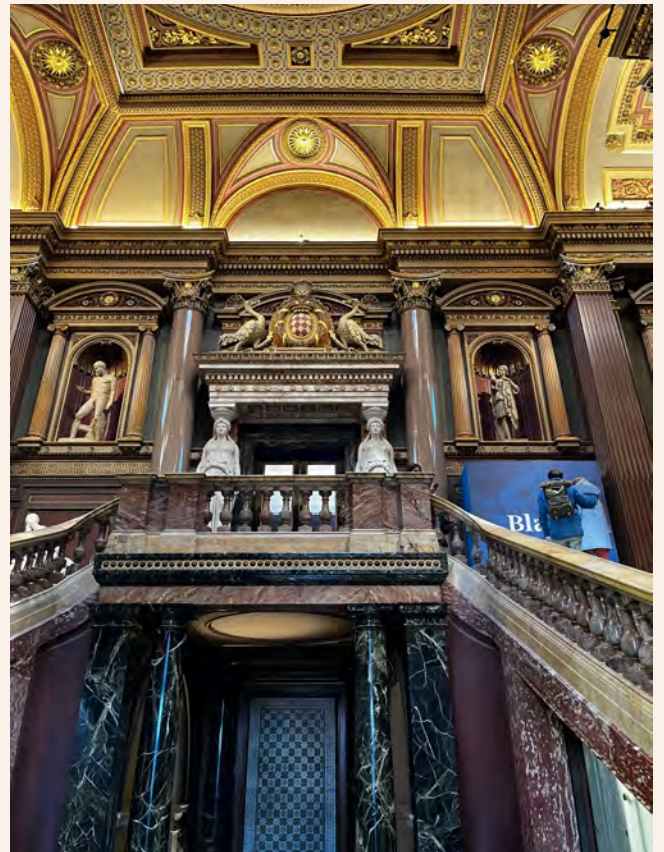
Jesus Green Lido



Punts on Jesus Green



Winter Wonderland on Parker's Piece



The Fitzwilliam Museum

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

WITH THANKS TO BRENDAN

International students enjoy a vibrant community here at Magdalene! One of our yearly highlights has been the International Freshers' Week that our College representatives have historically run at the start of term, before all the Home students moved into College. This year we ran board game nights, picnics, College tours and an outing to a local ice cream shop. It's a really good way to start the year and get to know all the other International students.

Previously we have run events like International students' movie evenings, themed formal dinners (for Lunar New Year, Diwali and Christmas), and we team up with Welfare Officers and BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic) Officers in our JCR to host combined events to mingle with the rest of the College!

Rice cookers are allowed in shared kitchens. The College provides some storage space for luggage over the summer, though the number of bags you are allowed to keep in College varies each year.

We look forward to welcoming you to Magdalene, wherever in the world you are from!



Celeste

A FINAL NOTE FROM US

Thank you for reading!

We hope this has helped you to learn more about how enjoyable life is at Magdalene.

If you have any questions about the application process, feel free to make contact with the General Enquiries, Admissions or Access teams at Magdalene. We've listed their details on the 'Contact Us' page.

Equally, you can follow the College (@magdalene) and the JCR (@magdalenecollegejcr) on Instagram. For any further questions about student life get in contact with us at jcr-president@magd.ac.uk.

Karen and Georgi



THANK YOU TO EVERYONE INVOLVED

Illustration by Sankalp Kapur - '@doodlekalp'

Bethan

Brendan

Catriona

Celeste

Clara

Dev

Eleanor

Grace

Grace

Isaac

Madeleine

Mark

Matt

Naomi

Nat

Sarah

Sophia

Susannah

Theo

Tom

Wayne Johnson

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Sally