

## My Indoor Sky

In a place like the Canary Islands, home to one of the most important observatories in the northern hemisphere, it's hard not to come into contact with astronomy. There are always stories in the news related to the Canary Islands observatories and their discoveries. There are days when the Observatorio del Teide opens its doors to the public and I find myself given the rare opportunity to visit the solar and nighttime telescopes.

In the Museum of Science and the Cosmos, a place where I am a frequent visitor, astronomy plays a very important role. In the clean and clear sky of Tenerife I have learned to navigate using the sun and the stars. I have enjoyed observing the night sky with my friends; locating stars and planets, finding constellations and tracing the Milky Way as it arches across the night sky.

I grew up with astronomy. Of all my childhood memories, the one I am most fond of is when my father covered the ceiling of my room with heavenly bodies: small and large stars, planets, moons and galaxies. Phosphorescent plastic, glued to the ceiling, created an indoor sky. Every night, when the lights were turned off, I enjoyed watching my little sky, creating my constellations and inventing names for the stars, comets and planets. The knowledge that far from the city lights there is an incredible sky, even more wonderful than the one I used to enjoy as a child in the ceiling of my room, has always drawn me to the night sky and its mysteries.

This early interest in astronomy has driven me to try and learn as much as I can from documentaries such as *The Cosmos* and *The Mechanical Universe*. I've also found that software like *Celestia* and articles in magazines and online sites have been great sources of knowledge. Now that I am getting ready to go to college to study physics, I have found this great opportunity to live up to my childhood dreams of making astronomical observations. While I have visited the observatories in Tenerife several times, I never had the chance to be involved in an observation. I find the idea of helping prepare and perform an observation and later analyze the results with people who have the same interest, simply fascinating. I am sure it would be a great experience to be able to know how it feels to go up the mountain to search the sky for answers.

If I am selected, the ESO astronomy camp would become a highlight in the journey that began with those phosphorescent stars on the ceiling of my room. It would also help me to continue down the path of learning and discovery that will, hopefully, last a lifetime.