

Look abroad and swap the rat race for the Riviera

Language skills can help to land excellent PA jobs overseas, says **Martin O'Rourke**

Life is good for Lucy Bolwell. She has a job she loves, her apartment has a beautiful sea view, and her journey to work takes just five minutes by scooter. Ms Bolwell is a British PA working in Monaco for a yacht broking company.

Offered the job a year ago, she recalls: "It felt like a brave step to leave behind friends and family, but it's not a decision that I regret in the slightest. It's very much a lifestyle job."

Ms Bolwell, 24, a graduate of Kingston University in Surrey, previously worked as a PA in London. The journey from her Fulham home to her job in the City frequently took 90 minutes, she says, adding that she cannot stress enough how important it has been to her "to leave all that behind".

Ms Bolwell was well prepared for her new job, having spent a gap year in Lyons during her university course which enabled her to perfect her French and adapt to the local culture.

"This has come in particularly useful. My boss doesn't speak a word of French, so I have to do everything for him that requires translating and interpreting," she says. "I am with a company where everything I do really makes a difference," she adds. "Working abroad has given me the travel bug, and I'd love to work in other countries in the future."

Marie Eichler, director of the Lon-

don recruitment company which placed Ms Bolwell, says that using a gap year to brush up a language can be pivotal. Ms Eichler's firm, Appointments Bi-Language, places bilingual applicants in the UK and abroad. She says: "Aside from the IT skills required of all PAs, and a willingness to adapt to the local culture, it is essential that

they are fluent in the language. The ideal candidate will have spent a gap year while at university in the country to which they will be assigned."

Ms Bolwell is one of many thousands throughout the European Union who further their careers abroad. According to the website www.labourmobility.com, about 2 per cent

of EU residents now work in another part of the Union. Ms Eichler says there is great enthusiasm for working abroad. "Twenty per cent of our current candidates want to work abroad, usually in France, Italy, Spain and Germany. I would estimate that about a quarter of those end up in a foreign position."