

THE WHITE EDIT

OUR FULL GUIDE TO GETTING MARRIED IN FRANCE

The only legally binding type of wedding ceremony in France is a civil ceremony. Civil ceremonies can only take place in the Mairie (Town Hall). Meeting the legal requirements for a civil ceremony can be a complex process, particularly for non-residents who are also required to meet a minimum residency period of 40 days immediately prior to the civil ceremony taking place. Many couples choose to avoid the legalities and paperwork involved and have a low-key civil ceremony at a registry office in the UK to fulfil the legal requirements, followed by a Wedding Blessing/Humanist Ceremony in France at a venue of their choice.

Civil Ceremony

In France, civil ceremonies are conducted by the mayor (or his representative) and normally take place in the Town Hall (Mairie). You can have a civil ceremony if...

- One/both of you can prove residency, in the area where the ceremony will take place, for at least 40 days immediately preceding the date of the ceremony.

This also applies to same-sex couples. It has been legal for same-sex couples to be married in France since 2013.

Religious Ceremony

You can only have a religious ceremony after a civil ceremony has taken place. The civil ceremony can take place in France or in your home country.

The religious official performing the ceremony will require your marriage certificate as proof that this has occurred before the religious ceremony can take place.

Wedding Blessing / Humanist Ceremony

The private, non-denominational, non-institutional nature of a Wedding Blessing or Humanist Ceremony gives you the flexibility to marry when, where and how you want. There is no legal requirement for the ceremony to take place in a licensed building. Therefore, you can hold your ceremony wherever you like —at your favourite restaurant, in a private villa, on a secluded beach or in the middle of an olive grove. The choice really is yours. There is no legal requirement for the ceremony to follow a set structure so it can be as formal or informal as you like — you can have a traditional Church Ceremony with the religious parts replaced with readings and vows or you can have a light-hearted ceremony with humorous readings and vows. Once again, the choice is yours. These ceremonies are usually performed by a celebrant who will be able to help you select the style, structure, readings, music and vows that reflect your tastes and feelings as a couple resulting in a highly personalised and unique, non-religious ceremony.

Please note: If you do choose to have a Wedding Blessing or Humanist Ceremony you will also need to have an official civil ceremony in order for your marriage to be legally binding.

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- One/both of you can prove residency, in the area where the ceremony will take place, for at least 40 days immediately preceding the date of the ceremony.

*** If you or your family own a property in France the residency requirement may not have to be adhered to quite as strictly. However, as this is entirely at the discretion of the local Mayor, you need to contact the Mairie where you wish the wedding ceremony to take place to request a meeting to discuss the matter. ***

The process:

1. Your marriage application (marriage banns) must be posted at the Mairie (town hall) of the town where one of you has resided for at least 30 days prior to the application. The marriage banns must be posted no less than 10 days prior to your wedding. You will probably require the following documentation:

- A valid passport (for non-French applicants) or a French resident permit.
- Birth certificate (long form version).
- Justificatifs de domicile (proof of residency) 2 forms of residency are required Eg. Utility bill; rental agreement.
- If you are planning to have a prenuptial agreement the notary preparing the document will issue you with a Certificat du notaire which you must present to the Mairie.
- Certificat de celibat (certificate of celibacy) A certificate to prove that you are legally allowed to get married. British nationals can't get this, so will need to download an official note available from <https://www.gov.uk/marriage-abroad/y/france>
- Non-French citizens also need to provide a Certificate de Coutume. This document confirms you are not married in your home country and there are no other impediments to the marriage. Information about UK-issued CNIs can be obtained from <https://www.gov.uk/marriage-abroad/y/france> Non-UK citizens can click here for details on how to obtain the relevant certificate from their home country.

- If you are widowed, you must provide both your previous marriage certificate and the death certificate of your husband/wife.
- If you are divorced or your marriage was annulled, you must provide the relevant certificates.

Please note: Documents issued outside of France must be accompanied by an official translation, translated by an agency verified by the French consulate. The document will also need to have a Hague Apostille from the relevant issuing office of your country of residence (For UK issued documents go to www.gov.uk/get-document-legalised).

*** Specific requirements may vary so we recommend you contact the Mairie of the town/village where you wish to be married for a list of the documents and translations they require. ***

- 1.** The Ceremony will take place at the Mairie and will be performed by the mayor. Ceremonies are conducted in French. If you wish to have a translator present you will need to make arrangements for this.
- 2.** After the ceremony you will be issued with a LIVRET DE FAMILLE; an official document used to record events such as births, deaths, divorce, name changes etc.

Please note: The Livret de Famille is not a marriage certificate. Unfortunately, marriage certificates are not automatically issued by the French authorities but if you wish to obtain a marriage certificate you can apply in writing to the Mairie where the marriage ceremony took place.



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Increasingly, many couples are choosing to have a low-key civil ceremony at a registry office in the UK to fulfil the legal requirements, followed by a Wedding Blessing/Humanist Ceremony in France — regarding this as their actual 'Wedding Day' — where they share vows and exchange rings in the presence of their friends and family.

Wedding Blessing / Humanist Ceremony

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*** Although we have done our best to ensure the information above is correct, please note it is intended only as a guideline and should not be regarded as legal advice. ***

