

THE WHITE EDIT

OUR FULL GUIDE TO GETTING MARRIED IN SPAIN

Unfortunately for most, you can only legally marry in Spain if you are Catholic and wish to get married in a Roman Catholic Church, *or* if you are legally registered as a Spanish resident and wish to have a civil ceremony. 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 Spain — regarding this as their actual 'Wedding Day' — where they share vows and exchange rings in the presence of their friends and family.

Civil Ceremony

You can have a civil ceremony if...

... one of you is a Spanish citizen and can provide proof of local residency.

... neither of you are Spanish citizens but one/both of you can prove that you've been legally resident in Spain for the previous two years.

This also applies to same-sex couples. It has been legal for same-sex couples to be married in Spain since 2005.

Religious Ceremony

You can have a religious ceremony if...

... one/both of you are Catholic and neither of you are divorced.

No residency rules apply so it is perfectly okay if neither of you live in Spain. A Roman Catholic wedding is legally binding and will take place in a Roman Catholic Church.

Although it is possible to for other religions to marry in Spain e.g. Protestants, Muslims, Jews, the marriage will not be considered valid in your home country without a civil registry.

(i.e You will also need to legally marry in your country of residence.)

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.

Civil Ceremony

You can have a civil ceremony in Spain if..

- one of you is a Spanish citizen and can provide proof of local residency.
- neither of you are Spanish citizens but one/both of you can prove that you've been legally resident in Spain for the previous two years.

The Process:

1. You must apply to the Civil Registry (Registro Civil), District Court (Juzgado) or local Town Hall for a certificate of permission to marry. The Certificado de Capacidad Matrimonial will be issued on condition that both of you fulfil the legal requirements to marry.

Please note: this application must be made in the town/city where at least one of you is registered as having permanent residence.

**** Civil Registry offices can be busy. It is usually better to go earlier rather than later in the day. ****

If you do not speak Spanish it may be advisable to hire a Spanish lawyer or to get someone who speaks Spanish to help you with the paperwork to ensure the process runs smoothly.

You will probably require the following documentation:

- A completed official application form. Forms are available from the Civil Registry.
- A valid passport (for non-Spanish applicants) or a DNI identification card for Spanish nationals. Photocopies of these documents will also be required.
- Birth certificate (long form version).
- Non-Spanish citizens need to provide a Certificado de No Impedimento (Certificate of No Impediment or CNI). 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/spain> Non-UK citizens can click here for details on how to obtain the relevant certificate from their home country.
- Non-Spanish citizens need to provide a Certificate of Residence (Padr  Municipal d'Habitants) and Certifica de Empadronamiento—a card sent to you by the local Town Hall to show you are on the Electoral Register— in order to prove Spanish residency for the past two years.
- 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.

*** It is advisable to check with the Civil Registry Office for the specific town/city in which you wish to be married as requirements can vary. The Spanish Ministry for Justice website www.mjusticia.gob.es contains information on civil marriage in Spain and a list of Civil Registries.***

Please note: Documents issued outside of Spain must be legally translated into Spanish and have a Hague Apostille from the relevant issuing office in your country of residence (For UK issued documents go to www.gov.uk/get-document-legalised).

2. Once the application has been filed, the Banns are posted at the Civil Registry/Town Hall (a public declaration of intent to marry) and in the case of a foreigner's application, at their Consular office. After a minimum period of 21 days without contest the marriage can legally proceed.
3. Once the application has been made you will be given a date and time to return to the Civil Registry to confirm that all is in order. The appointment is sent by post to the address on the application. On the day of the interview you must take your original DNIs, passports or residency cards. You will also need a witness to accompany you. This can be a family member or close friend who can testify to the authenticity of your relationship. He/she will also need to bring his/her passport.
4. Once you have been issued with your marriage license you need to schedule the date and time of the ceremony. This must be done at the town hall/Civil Registry where you wish the ceremony to take place.
5. Once the ceremony has taken place, it will be registered with the Civil Registry by the official who conducted the ceremony.
6. Approximately three weeks later the LIBRO DE FAMILIA (the marriage certificate—a book in which details of any children born to the couple will be written, as well as the deaths of family members) and the International Wedding Certificate (which allows you to register and legalize your wedding in your home country) will be ready for collection.



Religious Ceremony

You can have a religious ceremony if...

- one/both of you are Catholic and neither of you are divorced.

No residency rules apply so neither of you have to live in Spain. A Roman Catholic wedding is legally binding and will take place in a Roman Catholic Church.

**** Couples planning to have a Catholic marriage ceremony in Spain need to allow at least six months for all the documentary requirements to be met. ****

The Process:

1. Visit your local parish priest to discuss your plans to marry in Spain. He will be able to guide you through the process and documentation required.

You will probably require the following documentation:

- A pre-nuptial enquiry form.
- A valid passport.
- Baptism Certificate issued from the parish of your baptism.
Please note: the certificate must be dated at least six months prior to your wedding.
- Confirmation Certificate issued from the parish of your confirmation.
Please note: the certificate must be dated at least six months prior to your wedding.
- Couples may also be required to provide a Certificate of No Impediment (Certificado de No Impedimento or CNI), Certificate de Coutume, Certificate of Nulla Osta or Certificate of Freedom to Marry, to confirm they are not married in their home country and there are no other impediments to the marriage. This can be obtained from the registrar office of the home country. A UK-issued CNI can be obtained by giving notice of marriage to your local registry office or registrar in the UK. Please note: a UK issued CNI is only valid within the UK and must be exchanged for one that's valid in Spain. To do this, an application pack with supporting documents must be sent by registered post to the British Consulate in Madrid. Non-UK citizens can click here for details on how to obtain the certificate relevant to their country.
- A certificate confirming the completion of a pre-marriage course. Your priest will inform you whether this is required.
- Permission from your Parish Priest(s) to be married outside your own parish.
- If one of you is not a Catholic, a dispensation, issued by the Bishopric of the home country, is required.

2. Your Parish Priest will forward all the necessary documents to the local Bishopric who will then forward them on to the appropriate Bishopric in Spain i.e. the one residing over the area where you wish to marry.
3. Once the marriage has taken place, it must be registered at the local Civil Registry. Please note: This must be done within one week of the ceremony taking place.
4. Approximately three weeks later the LIBRO DE FAMILIA (the marriage certificate—a book in which details of any children born to the couple will be written, as well as the deaths of family members) and the International Wedding Certificate (which allows you to register and legalize your wedding in your home country) will be ready for collection.

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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.

*** 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. ***

