

1. HOW TO LEGALLY GET MARRIED IN GREECE

Greece is consistently one of the most popular locations for a destination wedding worldwide, in particular the stunning Greek Islands such as *Santorini*, *Mykonos* and *Rhodes*. However, if you're planning your own Aegean adventure or you've always dreamt of being a Grecian goddess on your wedding day, there are a number of legal requirements that you'll need to be aware of. The entire process can take several weeks, therefore many couples engage the services of a local wedding planner, who can usually start the application process by lodging some or all of the paperwork on your behalf.

2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Requirements can vary slightly in each region or island, so couples are advised to obtain specific advice from the locality in which they plan to marry. Non-residents are free to marry in Greece, however if one of the individuals is a resident (but not a citizen) of Greece, they must possess a valid 'Residence Permit' in order to wed there. Both civil and religious marriage ceremonies are legally recognized in Greece, and foreigners can choose to marry in either a civil or religious ceremony, or both. The legal minimum age for marriage in Greece is 18 years for both men and women, however it is possible for younger couples to marry with a court order.

3. SAME SEX MARRIAGE

Couples must publish a wedding notice in one of the local Greek language newspapers a minimum of eight days prior to applying for a marriage license. Their names must be phonetically written in Greek and not Latin characters. In small towns where local newspapers are not published, a notice must be posted at the Town Hall or Community Office instead.

4. DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED

The following documents are required for both the bride AND the groom. For those who plan to marry in both a civil and a religious ceremony, two sets of these documents will be required, one for the Town Hall and one for the Church.

1. A valid passport.

2. A certified copy of the applicant's Birth Certificate with an Apostille stamp affixed, along with an official translation into Greek. The translation must be made and certified by either a lawyer, the Greek Consulate in your home country, the Foreign Ministry's Department of Translation in Greece, or by a certified translator (some wedding coordinators can provide this service). Note: An Apostille is a stamp or printed form that is attached to an official document, usually by a local Embassy, Court or Government Department, that certifies the authenticity of that document.
3. If either applicant has been married before, evidence of termination of all previous marriages via a Death Certificate or Divorce Decree with Apostille stamp affixed, along with an official translation into Greek.
4. Proof of Freedom to Marry – This varies depending upon your nationality, and may be called an "Affidavit of Marriage", "Certificate of Non-Impediment", "Certificate of Marital Status" or "Notary Public Statement". In some instances, this can be applied for once you arrive in Greece, however minimum residence or waiting periods may apply, so you should contact your country's Embassy in Greece well in advance to determine the requirements. The document must be completed in both English and Greek and notarised by the relevant Embassy. Alternatively, if it is obtained from your home country, it must be accompanied by an official translation into Greek. An Apostille stamp may also be required, and your Embassy can advise you of this.
5. A copy of the local newspaper in which the wedding notice was published.

Note: US citizens may be able to avoid the need for a Greek Marriage License if they have a valid Marriage License issued from their home state in the US, provided that it does not explicitly state that the license is only valid within a particular state or states within the US. Alternatively, it may be possible to have the license amended to include Greece as one of the localities where the marriage may take place.

5. CIVIL MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The required documentation (listed above) must be taken in person to the Town Hall or (Demarchio) or the President of the Community (Proedros Kinotitos) and this can be delivered by your wedding coordinator, if you have one. If everything is in order, the Marriage License will be issued eight days later and is valid for six months for all locations throughout Greece. The

couple must then submit a joint application to the Mayor or President of the community where they would like to marry, who will then confirm the date of the wedding ceremony. The civil ceremony can take place at the Town Hall, Mayor's office or another pre-approved venue such as the couple's hotel or resort, and is often performed by the Mayor. Civil ceremonies cannot take place at an archaeological site. The ceremony is typically conducted in Greek; therefore, a translator may be required if neither the bride or groom speak the language. Two witnesses must attend the ceremony, and one may act as the interpreter if required. Witnesses must have either their passports or Greek identity documents with them at the ceremony.

6. RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE CEREMONY

The required documentation (listed above) must be taken to the Priest who will perform the ceremony. The priest will then apply for the Marriage License on the couple's behalf. Additional requirement and waiting periods will vary, depending upon the relevant church, and couples are advised to contact the Priest as early as possible to determine what is required for their particular religion. Greek Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish ceremonies are all possible in Greece.

7. REGISTRATION OF THE MARRIAGE

Once the wedding ceremony has taken place, the couple has 40 days to register the marriage at the local Registrar's Office/Office of Vital Statistics (known as the *Lixiarhio*). This applies to both civil and religious ceremonies. A marriage can be registered by either the bride or groom, or by a third person provided that they are in possession of a notarised 'Power of Attorney' authorising them to do so. Once registered, the Marriage Certificate is issued within three days, and can be collected from the Registrar or mailed to the couple. Marriages that are not registered with the *Lixiarhio* are not legally valid.

For more information on the specific requirements for legal marriage in Greece based on your nationality, please contact your relevant Embassy.