

Going formal

Cut through the red tape for couples getting married abroad

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Amid all the excitement of a big, elaborate wedding day, there's one moment that's as low-key as it gets - yet it's actually the most important part of the day.

When the couple steals away from their assembled friends and family to sign the marriage register, it's a far cry from the joy of being showered in confetti or stepping onto the floor for their first dance, but that's actually the moment the marriage is made official. Without that, the rest of the day is just a very big (and very expensive) party.

The legalities are even more important for clients tying the knot abroad, who need to make sure they organise all the

necessary paperwork in advance, as well as ticking the right boxes on the day. Most operators or in-hotel wedding planners will handle the specifics, but get off to a good start with our lowdown on the legalities in popular wedding destinations.

► GREECE

Sales pitch: Those blue seas and sugar-cube houses sell themselves, but if clients need convincing, remind them it's just a short-haul, low-cost flight away so there's no barrier on friends and family joining the celebrations. Choose the island and accommodation that reflects the wedding vibe - if it's all adults, romantic Santorini might

TOP TIP

Kuoni usually requires couples to send all their documents at least three months before the wedding date

fit the bill, but couples with kids might prefer the family feel of Corfu or Rhodes.

Red tape: The time needed for local authorities to issue a marriage licence varies between islands but the tourist board recommends allowing eight days prior to the wedding. Couples

must visit the local registry office twice: first, to declare their intent to marry, and two to three days after the wedding to get a signed certificate. Religious ceremonies can be arranged, but often require baptism and confirmation certificates and consultation with the local bishop.

Paperwork: Copy of passport; full-length birth certificate; Certificate of No Impediment issued in the UK, dated no more than three months before the ceremony; and, if applicable, an adoption certificate, decree absolute or death certificate in the case of divorce or death of a previous spouse, and a deed poll certificate if either party's name has changed. All documents →

PICTURE: MONEMVASIA.GR



→ must be officially certified by the Foreign Office ('legalised' with an apostille stamp) and translated into Greek.

► **CYPRUS**

Sales pitch: Its Anglophile atmosphere and ease of access make Cyprus one of the most popular destinations for UK couples, and the fact that sunshine is pretty much guaranteed doesn't hurt either. With gorgeous beachfront hotels or one-off venues such as Larnaca Castle to choose from, the bride and groom can design a wedding to fit their personalities. **Red tape:** Couples must visit the municipal offices of the town in which they are planning to marry to secure a marriage licence. This would usually be 15 days before the ceremony, but most UK couples opt for a more expensive 'special licence' (€282), which allows the wedding to take place

in as little as two to three days. Ceremonies are in English. **Paperwork:** Copy of passport; birth certificate; evidence of freedom to marry (a signed affidavit or declaration stamped by a solicitor or UK court); plus, where relevant, a decree absolute, death certificate and previous marriage certificate.

► **SAINT LUCIA**

Sales pitch: Between the majestic Pitons, crystal-clear Caribbean Sea and soft-sand beaches, the only dilemma couples will face here is where to pose for photos. Saint Lucia's romantic hotels are well geared-up for hosting weddings big or small, and there's plenty to keep honeymooners happy, from action in the verdant interior to total relaxation on its stunning beaches. **Red tape:** There's no residency period in Saint Lucia, so couples can apply for a marriage licence



as little as two days before the ceremony (£86) or even on the day itself (£139). Most UK couples favour a hotel-based ceremony, but for those wishing to get married in a church, Catholic or Anglican weddings are most common, requiring permission from the local church. The Saint Lucia Tourist Board publishes a Weddings & Honeymoons brochure outlining legal requirements and contact details for wedding planners and churches, available at stlucia.org or

by email to sltbinfo@stluciauk.org. **Paperwork:** Passport, birth certificate, a sworn affidavit of consent stamped by a notary public if either party is under 18, and a decree absolute or death certificate if either party has been married before.

► **ANTIGUA & BARBUDA**

Sales pitch: Antigua's colonial heritage and epic landscapes provide plenty of choice for a one-off wedding, from its 365 sandy beaches to the 19th-century cathedral in the capital St John's. And with dozens of new wedding and honeymoon packages across the islands' hotels - Keyonna Beach, Carlisle Bay and Hermitage Bay have all added new options this year - it's clear how crucial this market is to the country. **Red tape:** Couples must go to the Ministry of Justice in St John's to complete the application and



ABOVE: Cyprus

confirm a time and date for the ceremony with a marriage officer. The office closes at 4.30pm Monday-Thursday and 3pm on Fridays, so guests on flights arriving in the afternoon might have to register the following day.

They'll pay a special marriage fee of £105, registration fee of £28, a marriage officer fee of £70 and an additional £7 for any copies of the marriage certificate. Cruise ship passengers can even hop off and get married on the island →

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LEFT:
Saint Lucia

RIGHT:
Las Vegas



→ before getting back on board.
Paperwork: Passport with at least six months' validity, birth certificate, and decree absolute or death certificate for partners married previously. All documents must be original or certified as original by the issuing departments.

▶ NEW YORK CITY

Sales pitch: It's where Harry met Sally and Carrie fell in love with Big, so it's no wonder so many UK couples fall for a New York wedding, not forgetting

the countless number who get engaged there and decide to return for the day itself.
Red tape: Couples must submit an online application to the City Clerk's website, cityclerk.nyc.gov, then attend in person to pick up a marriage licence (\$35) at any of the City Clerk's offices in the five boroughs. The licence is valid after 24 hours and for up to 60 days, and if they want to throw in a ceremony at the Manhattan Marriage Bureau, it'll cost just \$25. This also applies to same-sex marriages, which have been

legal in New York City since 2011.
Paperwork: The marriage licence application acts as an affidavit, with each party swearing there are no legal impediments to their nuptials, but couples must list any prior marriages and bring divorce or death certificates to prove they are free to marry, plus their passport as identification.

▶ LAS VEGAS

Sales pitch: If your idea of a Vegas wedding is the Elvis Chapel at 2am, think again - sure, Sin City has a name for

quickie ceremonies, but there are altogether classier affairs on offer too. There's plenty to keep guests entertained outside the ceremony itself, so the couple need not feel responsible for putting on activities, and if there's time before the nuptials, why not suggest throwing the hen or stag do here too?

Red tape: Nearly 82,000 couples get a marriage licence here each year, making it the number-one spot for weddings worldwide. The licence (\$77) is granted immediately with no waiting

New York



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BARBADOS

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*Minimum stay: 3 nights. Government & marriage officiant fees apply. Further terms & conditions and blackout dates apply.



WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS LEGALITIES DESTINATIONS

period, with a choice of a chapel wedding (at extra cost) or a civil ceremony at the Marriage Commissioner's Office. Clients can fill out a pre-application at clarkcountynv.gov

Paperwork: Couples will need their passport, and dates of any previous marriages, divorces or death of a spouse, but will not need to produce the documents. The marriage certificate takes up to 10 days to be issued and will then need to be certified (\$15) and affixed with an apostille from the Nevada Secretary of State (\$20) to be valid in the UK.

MAURITIUS

Sales pitch: That sand-between-the-toes wedding might be what every bride dreams of, but it's harder to come by than you might think. That's where Mauritius, with its high-end hotels and focus on romance, comes in. Unlike the Maldives, Mauritius weddings are legally recognised in the UK, and are likely to suit small wedding parties or perhaps just the couple themselves.

Red tape: Once they arrive in Mauritius, the bride and groom must bring their documents to the Civil Status Office in Port Louis at least one day before the wedding. This might be organised by the hotel wedding planner - for example, Beachcomber Hotels arranges a taxi the day before the wedding to visit the main Port Louis office and the local sub-office - but can also be done independently.

Paperwork: Guests need to get their birth certificate reissued within three months of the

RIGHT: Beachcomber Hotels, Mauritius



PICTURES: NYC WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER/FABRICE BETTEY

wedding, or get an affidavit swearing to the authenticity of the original. Add to that a passport, and documents relating to previous marriages, divorces or death of a spouse, adoption certificate or name changes by deed poll.

ITALY

Sales pitch: "Italy is a pure delight as a wedding destination," says Planet Weddings managing director Mathilde Robert. "But let your clients know this destination, although special, comes with a price tag, so couples need to be prepared to splash out." Weddings here are more likely to be set in the rolling

Tuscan hillside or staggeringly beautiful Amalfi Coast than a beach, but with unique venue options - everything from hiring out a villa to a former castle or monastery - the setting is still bound to impress.

Red tape: The paperwork can seem a little daunting, but once that's sorted, the rest of the process is straightforward. Couples must visit the registry office to register their intent to marry at least two days before the ceremony, and arrange an interpreter as the wedding ceremony is conducted in Italian. Women who have

been married before must wait at least 10 months from the date of divorce or death of their former husband.

Paperwork: Couples must bring a 10-year passport, full-length birth certificate, Certificate of No Impediment issued within six months of the wedding and translated in Italy, a bilingual statutory declaration before a solicitor or notary public (both legalised by the Foreign Office),

and any divorce, death, deed poll or adoption certificates, where applicable. **tw**



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