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English Lawyers and Spanish Abogados

## **Getting Married in Spain**

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### **Civil ceremonies**

Application for a civil marriage must be made to the Civil Registry (Registro civil) or District court (juzgado) in the place where the marriage will be celebrated.

The documents needed are:

- Application form (obtained at the Civil Registry or District court). It should be signed by both the bride and the groom.
- Birth certificate (original) If not born in Spain it needs apostilled and translation
- Proof both parties are free to marry (Fe de solteria o de vida), together with Spanish official translation.
- Divorce/Annulment/Death certificates: If you have been married before, you must submit evidence that the relationship has ended. Remember if the document has been issued outside Spain, it should be officially translated and apostilled.
- Certificate of Residence. Foreigners who are temporary residents in Spain or have lived here less than two years may execute an affidavit regarding their place of residence before a consular officer. This is a free service. Apparently Spanish law permits foreigners who are not Spanish residents to marry here. The different autonomous communities in Spain may, however, interpret this law differently and may be required that one of the parties be a citizen or resident in Spain.
- Posting of Banns: Banns are public announcements that a couple plans to get married, giving any knowledgeable citizen an opportunity to object.

After the ceremony the marriage is then recorded in the Civil registry and a Spanish marriage certificate issued.

It is best to start the paper work at least 6 months ahead of the wedding. An average delay of 30 to 45 days should be expected after the documents have been submitted and before the ceremony may be performed.

### **Religious marriages**

Spanish law recognizes Catholic, Protestant, Islamic and Jewish marriages as valid in Spain without the need of a second civil marriage.

For catholic marriages the following documents are needed:



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- Birth certificate, translated and apostilled
- Baptismal certificate, must be issued within the six month period prior to your wedding, and authenticated by the issuing Bishopric. Spanish translation must be attached.
- Proof both parties are free to marry, translated

If you wish to have a catholic ceremony and either you or your partner is a foreigner in Spain, you must contact the Bishop in the area where you plan to marry. Arrangements for a Catholic marriage generally take from one to three weeks.

After a religious ceremony, you have one week to present the church issued certificate to the nearest civil registry. The marriage is not recognised in Spain if you fail to registry.

Always report your wedding at your own country's embassy or consulate.

There is also the possibility of getting married in Gibraltar. Local marriage law in Gibraltar does not contain any residential requirements and so therefore it is a simple procedure and it is a world-wide recognised marriage. To get married at Gibraltar's registry office you will need to present yourself at the registry at least 24 hours before you wish to get married. You will need your birth certificate, passport and if you've been married before, a copy of your divorce decree absolute. The registrar will only accept originals and not photocopies. Recent legislation permits the marriage registrar to marry couples outside the registry office, if requested (there are four hotels where you can do this and also at some historical buildings or at a natural setting). As Gibraltar is a popular location for getting married it is wise to plan well in advance. Bookings need to be made directly with the Registry Office:

Sir Joshua Hassan House  
Secretary's Lane  
(+350) 72289  
(+350) 51725  
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**Sandra Wrightson is a Barrister and Registered Foreign Lawyer at De Cotta McKenna y Santafé, a law firm specialising in dealing with all aspects of Spanish Law for English speaking clients**

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