



*Embassy of the United States of America  
Athens, Greece  
January 2013*

## GENERAL INFORMATION CONCERNING MARRIAGE CEREMONIES IN GREECE

As of July 18, 1982, both civil and religious marriage ceremonies may be performed in Greece according to Greek law number 1250. This law also legalized all civil marriages performed abroad between a Greek citizen and an alien prior to this date. Previously, the Greek State recognized only religious ceremonies.

Foreign nationals in Greece may be married either in a civil ceremony by a mayor, in a religious ceremony by a priest, or both. Although there is no residency requirement for foreign nationals wishing to marry in Greece, the bureaucratic procedure may take several weeks to complete before a marriage certificate may be obtained.

Marriage licenses can be obtained from one's current place of residence, prior to coming to Greece, are generally accepted and in some instances required by the Greek authorities. This only applies, however, if neither the bride nor the groom is resident in Greece.

Valid American Marriage Licenses are accepted in Greece provided that they do not contain restrictive statements; for example, "**THIS LICENSE IS VALID FOR COUNTY X**" or "**MARRIAGE WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK, CALIFORNIA, etc**". These restrictive statements may prohibit Greek municipality officials from honoring an otherwise valid American marriage license. If these statements cannot be removed, the license should be amended by the issuing authority to include GREECE as one of the places in which the marriage can take place. The marriage license should be endorsed with the APOSTILLE certification in accordance with the 1961 Hague Convention. The APOSTILLE certification is a special authentication for documents to be used outside the United States and can be obtained from your local State Secretary. In order to avoid any further delay in proceeding with the marriage upon arrival in Greece, a couple *may* obtain a formal translation of the license into the Greek language from the nearest Greek Consulate in the U.S. rather than at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Athens.

If one of the parties to be married in Greece is not an American, the American should ascertain that complete information (full name, birth data, names of parents, etc.) about his/her bride/groom is contained in his/her marriage license to avoid difficulties in its being accepted in Greece.

**NOTE:** Foreigners should be in possession of a resident permit if they reside permanently in Greece, or if the length of their stay in the country exceeds the residence permit free period. (American citizens can stay up to three months without having to obtain a residence permit). At the time of entry into the country, a stamp must be placed in the passport showing the date and place of entry. If the first port of entry is another Schengen state, the entry stamp should be placed in the passport upon entry into that country. Persons who lack port of entry stamps will not be able to perform or register their marriage.

According to the Greek Law, the Bureau of Vital Statistics (Registrar's Office) will refuse to register marriages performed in Greece in cases where one party is an illegal alien. Marriages which are not registered with the Bureau of Vital Statistics have no legal status. Please note that refugees in Greece are generally considered illegal aliens for marriage purposes, even if they have a valid refugee document.

***Important Note: All U.S. documents (birth, death, divorce, etc.,) must be endorsed with an APOSTILLE Certification, which can be obtained from the Secretary of State of the issuing state.***

***[http://athens.usembassy.gov/root/pdfs/state\\_secretary\\_offices.pdf](http://athens.usembassy.gov/root/pdfs/state_secretary_offices.pdf)***

The following documents are required for a Greek marriage license for ceremonies performed in Greece involving American citizens:

1. *A passport or other travel document*
2. *A certified copy of the birth certificate, along with an official translation. (See page 6 for details on location and fees).*
3. *If applicable, documentary evidence (death certificate or final/irrevocable divorce decree) of the termination of all previous marriages along with an official translation.*
4. *Confirmation by an American Consular Officer that there is no impediment to the marriage (i.e., neither party is under 18 years of age there is no existing un-dissolved marriage, etc.). This confirmation is issued in the form of an Affidavit of Marriage signed under oath by the American citizen bride or groom before a Consular Officer in Athens or Thessaloniki. (For minors under 18 years of age, a court decision approving the marriage is required).*

*The affidavit must be completed in English and Greek. In Athens, notarial services are provided at the Consular section by appointment only, Monday through Friday, 9:00a.m. to 1:00p.m., except Greek and American holidays and the last Wednesdays of each month, [http://athens.usembassy.gov/other\\_services.html](http://athens.usembassy.gov/other_services.html)  
In Thessaloniki, the Consulate General performs notarial services on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00p.m., except Greek and American holidays. The fee for the affidavit is \$50.00 or the equivalent in Euros.*

5. *A copy of the newspaper in which the wedding notice is published. Wedding notices should be published in one of the local newspapers in the Greek language (the names should be phonetically written in Greek and not in Latin Characters) before the application for a marriage license is submitted. In small towns where newspapers are not published, notices are posted by the mayor or president of the community at the City Hall or Community Office.*
6. *A revenue stamp (paravolo) in the amount of 15 euro.*

**FOR EXAMPLE:** *John R. Doe, born in Fair City, Indiana, USA, the son of James and Mary (nee Rice) Doe, and Sally Smith, daughter of Peter and Susan (nee Brown) Smith, born in Small Town, Tennessee, USA, will marry each other in the city of Athens.*

**Following the ceremony, the marriage must be registered at the Vital Statistics office (Lixiarcheio). See page 4.**

## **CIVIL MARRIAGES**

The above-mentioned documents must be taken in person to the City Hall (Demarchio) or the President of the Community (Proedros Kinotetos) where the applicant resides to apply for a marriage license. If both the bride and the groom are foreign nationals, each must submit a set of documents. The marriage license is issued eight days after the submission of the application and is good for six months. The civil ceremony may be performed anywhere in Greece.

Upon issuance of the marriage license, the concerned persons must jointly submit another application to the Mayor or President of the Community where they will marry. The official then sets the date for the wedding ceremony. An additional fee may be required (depends on the city hall). Two witnesses, provided by the marrying couple, must attend the wedding ceremony, one of whom will act as an interpreter. Witnesses should have their passports or Greek ID's with them.

## **RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES**

The documents listed on page 1, 2 and 3 must be taken to the priest who will perform the ceremony. He then will apply for and obtain the marriage license from the appropriate official. A waiting period is mandatory after the priest receives the documents. It should be noted that Greek law does not provide for the religious marriage of a Christian to a non-Christian.

Each denomination has specific requirements for celebrating a marriage as follows:

### **Protestant Church**

1. Church requirements:
  - a. Both parties must show evidence of the Christian faith and baptism.
  - b. The couple must meet with the Pastor at least once.
  - c. The couple is responsible for making arrangements to have flowers in the church and/or the services of an organist.
2. Two witnesses must be available to attend the wedding ceremony.  
More detailed information may be obtained by writing to the parish Priest of St Andrew's American Protestant Church, 17 Zaimi Street, 106 82 Athens, Greece, Tel. 210-645-2583, <http://www.standrewsgreece.com/>

### **Roman Catholic Church**

1. Church requirements:  
Each party must present the following certificates:
  - a. A certified copy of the birth certificate,
  - b. Certificate of baptismal, confirmation and freedom to marry (from the church in which it was performed),
  - c. If a civil marriage has preceded the church marriage, a copy of the civil marriage certificate,
  - d. Two witnesses with their ID's or passport, who will attest to the fact that the couple hasn't marry during their residency in Greece,
  - e. Proof of entry and legal residency in Greece,
  - f. Banns need not be posted in the case of non-residents of Greece.
2. Special dispensation is required in the case of mixed marriages. The non-Catholic party to the marriage must obtain certificates of birth, baptism, and freedom to marry from his or her church. Divorce is not recognized.

More detailed information may be obtained by writing to the Parish Priest, Saint Dionisios Aeropagitus Roman Catholic Cathedral, Omirou 9, 105 64 Athens, Greece or by calling 210 362 3603, <http://www.cathecclesia.gr/>.

## **Jewish Faith**

1. Clerical Requirements:
  - a. A certificate of freedom to marry issued by the senior Rabbinate of the area of residence must be presented.
  - b. If there is a prior marriage, the religious dissolution of the marriage is required
  - c. A statement from the Rabbinate proving the Jewish faith.

A Jewish marriage ceremony may be performed only if both bride and groom are of the Jewish faith. More detailed information may be obtained by writing to the Rabbi, Jewish Community, 5 Melidoni St., 105 53 Athens, Greece, or by calling 210 325 2875, 210 325 2823 or 210 325 2773, [www.athjcom.gr](http://www.athjcom.gr), [info@athjcom.gr](mailto:info@athjcom.gr).

## **BOTH A CIVIL AND A RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE**

Two sets of the aforementioned documents must be collected if a person desires both a civil and a religious ceremony. One set should be taken to the town hall and the entire process previously explained will be followed. The other set, likewise, should be taken to the priest and the requirements for the religious ceremony fulfilled.

## **REGISTRATION OF A MARRIAGE**

Marriages of American citizens in Greece are not registered at the Embassy, but instead at the Vital Statistics Office (Lixiarhio) of the city where performed. This applies to all marriages, whether civil or religious, and must be done within 40 days following the ceremony. After 40 days marriages can only be registered with the payment of revenue stamps. Marriages can be registered by either spouse, or by a third party who is in possession of a power of attorney signed before a Notary Public giving him/her authority to take all steps necessary to effect registration of the marriage. Marriages that are not registered have **no** legal validity.

## **LEGAL CONCERNS**

1. Either marriage, civil or religious, is a fully recognized legal marriage. It is not necessary to perform both ceremonies.
2. According to U.S. Statutes, marriages performed abroad, which are valid under the laws of that country, are generally accepted as valid by any state in the U.S.
3. Marriage ceremonies performed in Greece that have not been registered with the Bureau of Vital Statistics have **no** legal validity.
4. According to the Greek Nationality Law as amended on May 8, 1984, marriage does not result in the acquisition or loss of Greek nationality.

## **NOTE REGARDING OFFICIAL TRANSLATIONS INTO THE GREEK LANGUAGE**

Greek Consulates in the U.S. can sometimes perform official translations of documents. To save time, you may inquire whether the Greek Consulate that has consular jurisdiction over your area of residence in the U.S. offers translation services. If the Greek Consulate is unable to translate your documents, then the translation must be done at the Translation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Arionos St., tel. 210-328-5712, 210-328-5716, 210-328-5717, 210-328-5764.

<http://www1.mfa.gr/en/citizen-services/translation-service/translation-service.html>

Upon payment of an extra fee to the Translation Department, you may obtain expeditious service, which takes only up to three days instead of the approximate one-week processing period. The Translation Department accepts documents for translation from 09:00 a.m. to 13:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

### List of Athens Dailies

**ESTIA**, 9 Amerikis Str., 106 72 Athens

Tel: 210-322-0631/322-0481, Fax: 210-324-3071, E-mail: [estianews@otenet.gr](mailto:estianews@otenet.gr)

**RIZOSPASTIS**, 145 Herakliou Avenue, 142 31 N. Ionia

Tel: 210-259-2600, Fax: 210-259-2800, E-mail: [mailbox@rizospastis.gr](mailto:mailbox@rizospastis.gr) - [www.rizospastis.gr](http://www.rizospastis.gr)

**AVRIANI**, 31 Dimitros Str., 177 78 Athens

Tel: 210-348-9000, Fax: 210-348-9013, E-mail: [avriani@kmg.gr](mailto:avriani@kmg.gr)

**TO VIMA TIS KIRIAKIS**, 80 Michalakopoulou Str., 115 28 Athens

Tel: 211-365-7000 or 210-776-6000, Fax: 211-365-8004

E-mail : [tovima@dolnet.gr](mailto:tovima@dolnet.gr) - <http://tovima.dolnet.gr> or <http://digital.tovima.gr>

**KATHIMERINI**, Ethnarhou Makariou Avenue & 2 Dimitriou Falireos Str., 185 47 N.

Faliro, Tel: 210-480-8000, Fax: 210-480-8055

E-mail: [kathimerini@kathimerini.gr](mailto:kathimerini@kathimerini.gr) - [www.kathimerini.gr](http://www.kathimerini.gr)

**AVGHI**, 12 Aghiou Constantinou Street, 104 31 Athens

Tel: 210-523-1831/4, Fax: 210-523-1822/523-1830,

E-mail: [editors@avggi.gr](mailto:editors@avggi.gr) - [www.avggi.gr](http://www.avggi.gr)

**ELEFThEROS TYPOS**, Ag. Lavras 2 & Sarantaporou, 141 21 N. Iraklio

Tel: 210-811 3000, Fax: 210-811 3001, E-mail: [et@e-typos.com](mailto:et@e-typos.com)

<http://www.e-typos.com>

**ELEFThEROTYPIA**, 10-16 Minoos Str., 117 43 Athens

Tel: 211-109 6400, Fax: 211-109 6599, E-mail: [elftherotypia@elftherotypia.net](mailto:elftherotypia@elftherotypia.net)

**TA NEA**, 80 Michalakopoulou & Papadiamantopoulou Streets, 115 28 Athens

Tel: 211-365-7000 or 210-776-6000, Fax: 211-365-8301

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