

Marriage and PACS (civil partnerships) in France

Disclaimer: The information below relating to French legal requirements is provided for general information only and may not be totally accurate in a particular case. Questions involving current French requirements or interpretations of specific legal provisions or application to a specific case should be addressed to French government officials or to a [French attorney](#). The Embassy is not in a position to intercede with French authorities on behalf of U.S citizens seeking exceptions from French marriage requirements or PACS requirements.

Recognition of marriages performed abroad is dependent upon the laws of the state in which the marriage is to be recognized. A marriage performed in France is generally recognized in all states. However, treatment of a same-sex marriage, while legal in France, differs from state to state. Check with the Attorney General of your state of residence for more information.

U.S. diplomatic and consular officers **do not** have the legal authority to perform marriages. Marriages cannot be performed within the Embassy or within a U.S. Consular Office. Further information on marriage abroad, can be found on the website pages of the [U.S. Department of State](#).

French Visas

If you plan to marry a French citizen in France, **but do not intend to settle in France after the marriage**, check the [short stay visa information section](#) on the French Embassy website.

If you **plan to settle in France**, you should apply for a [long stay visitor visa](#). For more information on French visas, please refer to the website of the [French Embassy](#)

Residence Requirements

At least one of the parties to be married must have resided in France for at least forty days immediately preceding the marriage. This precludes a wedding in cases where both parties are only visiting for a short stay. Please contact the [French Consulate](#) in the U.S. for further information.

Publications of bans at the city hall (*mairie*)

French law requires the posting of marriage bans at the appropriate *city hall (mairie)* no less than ten days preceding the date of marriage. Some city halls may require that the complete marriage file be presented as many as 10 or more days prior to the publication of banns. The first publication of the banns can be made only at the end of thirty days of residence in France by one party to the marriage. Please contact the appropriate *mairie* to obtain information on this timeframe.

List of documentary requirements for marriage or PACs in France

Most city halls (mairies) in France require **some or all** of the following documents, please contact the city hall where you will be getting married for more information on this topic:

- **a valid U.S. passport;**
- **a French visa, and/or a French residence permit (*carte de séjour*);**
- **a certified copy of your U.S. birth certificate and a certified translation.** The birth certificate must be issued within the past three months and be affixed with the appropriate state issued [apostille](#). In order to obtain your birth certificate, visit the website of the National Center for Health Statistics – CDC <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w.htm> . If you need a translation of your birth certificate, a list of sworn translators is available at every mairie. You can also check the Embassy website for a list of certified translators .
- **certificat de coutume and certificat de célibat ou de non re-mariage:**

The U.S. does not have an equivalent of these documents. French authorities generally will accept a document provided by the U.S. Consulate called an ***attestation tenant lieu de certificat de coutume et de célibat*** in which you will attest before a consular officer that you are free to contract a marriage. Prior to scheduling your appointment with the Embassy to obtain this certificate, we encourage you to ask the city hall performing the marriage whether or not they will accept this document.

Obtaining the certificate: Visit our website pages for more information on obtaining the [attestation tenant lieu de certificat de coutume et de célibat](#) in [Paris](#) or [Marseille](#) by appointment only during notarial services hours.

At the time of your appointment, if necessary, we can also provide you with a general statement explaining that we do **not** issue the *certificat de célibat*.

- **proof of domicile (*justificatifs de domicile*)** You will need to present two documents (i.e.: electricity or telephone bills, rent etc.) establishing that you actually reside in the district in which you intent to marry.
- **certificat du notaire** (for a prenuptial marriage contract): If the parties to marriage opt for a prenuptial contract governing their respective properties (*régime du mariage*) the French notary preparing the contract will give the couple a certificate (*certificat du notaire*) which must be presented to the (*mairie*).

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Civil and religious ceremonies

Civil Ceremony: All marriages in France must be performed by a French civil authority, i.e., an *officier de l'état civil*, before any religious ceremony takes place.

Religious ceremony: A religious ceremony may be performed after the civil ceremony. The minister, priest or rabbi performing the ceremony will require the certificate of civil marriage (*certificat de célébration civile*) as proof that the civil ceremony has taken place. In France a religious ceremony does not constitute a legal marriage.

PACS (*Pacte Civil de Solidarité*)

The **PACS** offers all unmarried couples, same-sex and opposite-sex, a legal status carrying some but not all of the benefits of marriage. The act defines the PACS as “a contract concluded between two physical persons who have reached the age of majority, of different or the same gender, for the purposes of organizing their life in common.”

A PACS is not equivalent to marriage under French law, and the U.S. does not recognize it as a marriage. For further information on the PACS, please refer to any [French consular website](#) in the U.S., or the following webpages: <http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/N144.xhtml> and <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article331>.

Same-Sex Marriage in France

Same-sex marriages performed in France are recognized by the U.S. Federal Government and do confer immigration benefits. If you need to know if your same-sex marriage will be recognized in your state and what documentation may be needed, contact the office of the Attorney General of your state of residence in the United States.

Marriage certificate

Couples married in France automatically receive a *livret de famille*. This is a booklet which serves as an official record of a marriage and subsequent events in the family such as births, deaths, divorce, or name changes. These events are all recorded as *mentions marginales*. In France, the *livret de famille* is an official document.

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