

Getting married abroad



Sainsbury's Bank

Getting married abroad

It's estimated as many as one in five British weddings now take place overseas. With the lure of white sands and a higher chance of sunshine, it's easy to see the appeal.

If you're thinking about getting married abroad, our guide can help you with choosing the perfect location and venue as well as providing tips on dealing with the legal requirements and paperwork, budgeting and planning for the big day.



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Choose your venue

You may already have a location in mind, perhaps a favourite holiday spot or you might be dreaming of getting married on safari, on the banks of Lake Como in Italy or even on a cruise ship! If you can't decide, travel company Kuoni has put together a list of the [top ten locations for getting married abroad](#).

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1. Sri Lanka
 2. Mauritius
 3. Caribbean
 4. Thailand
 5. Bali
 6. Hawaii
 7. Las Vegas
 8. New York
 9. Kenya
 10. Italy

Many destinations are not just popular because of their white sandy beaches, but because of their residency laws. Some European destinations have no residency requirements while others require that you're in the country for a few days before you wed. In France the minimum residency requirement is 40 days.

Las Vegas in Nevada, USA, famously does not require any waiting period at all.

Before you decide on your destination, check the legal requirements of the country you wish to get married in via the [Marriage Abroad tool](#) from gov.uk. We cover legalities and paperwork in section 4.

Your venue may also dictate where you decide to get married. Do you want a beach wedding in the Caribbean or a hilltop church in Italy? Whichever you prefer, make sure you have a shortlist of questions to ask when you contact a travel agent or venue.

Choose your venue

Here are some questions to consider:

- ❓ Can we hold our service and reception in the same venue?
- ❓ Do you have a marriage licence?
- ❓ If the venue is outside, what happens if it rains?
- ❓ How many guests can the venue hold?
- ❓ Does the venue have a dedicated wedding coordinator?
- ❓ How far in advance do we need to book our wedding?
- ❓ Can you supply flowers, food and music too, or provide me with details for local vendors?
- ❓ If my friends and family book rooms too, can we get a bulk discount?
- ❓ What is your cancellation policy?
- ❓ Do we need to pay a deposit?
- ❓ How far in advance does the final payment need to be made?



It is important to compare venues; many resorts that cater for weddings will have package deals, but check prices for everything individually before signing on the dotted line.

Finally, you need to consider whether or not you intend to visit your shortlisted venues before making the final selection. If you cannot make it out to the venue before the big day, scour review sites like Tripadvisor and browse wedding forums to read reviews from other couples.



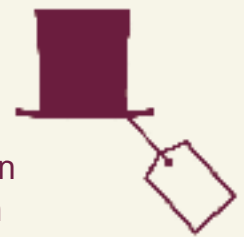
Set a budget

Before you get carried away dreaming of white sands, remember it is very likely your budget will have a big part to play in your final choice of venue, so set yourself a maximum budget to help you narrow down the list. A well planned budget can also help prevent unexpected items creeping into your expenditure list.

WeddingSite.co.uk has a very useful [online budget planner](#), which includes a suggested breakdown of your costs, a customisable list and allows you to compare estimated spend with actual spend.

Useful tips to ensure you stick to your budget

- £ Research the best airmfares using aggregators like [Skyscanner](#).
- £ Consider a country where the British pound is strong against the local currency. Be wary of paying for parts of the wedding after you're married as the exchange rate may change.
- £ Many travel agents now offer wedding packages which include everything you can think of - travel, hotel, ceremony and food. Always research as many options as possible.
- £ Using a local wedding planner may save you time and money and help you understand local customs.
- £ By using cash back sites you may be able to save some money on everything you buy, from booking flights, hotel rooms and much more using websites like [TopCashBack](#) or [Quidco](#).
- £ Have bridesmaids try on their dresses in store, then search for them online. You can receive up to 7% cash back at stores like Debenhams, House of Fraser and Coast by using cash back sites.
- £ Think about getting married in the low season.
- £ Remember when you get married abroad, your honeymoon can begin straight away and you could save on travel costs; you're already there!



If you're good with spreadsheets, you might find it easier to create your own budget planner, or download a template [online](#). Templates can be customisable, simple to print and easy to share with parents or your partner.

Set a budget

Your budget will largely be dictated by how you're financing your wedding. Here are some common options:



Savings

- you may have already started saving for your future together. If not, consider extending your engagement and work hard to cut out unnecessary treats like takeaway meals, nights out and new clothing so you can build up your wedding fund.



Parents

- Traditionally, the bride's father was expected to pay for his daughter's wedding, but in today's modern society this tends to be less common - your fiancé may not even have [asked for permission](#) to marry you. Nowadays both sets of parents tend to contribute to the wedding fund, along with the bride and groom-to-be.



Loans

- Some couples take out a [loan for weddings](#). Because repayments are usually fixed, you can budget accordingly, knowing how much you need to repay and when.



Credit Cards

- A credit card might help you spread the cost of your wedding, especially if you shop around and opt for a card that gives you 0% interest on purchases for an agreed period of time.

Credit card users are protected under [section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act](#) for credit card purchases where a single item or service costs between £100 and £30,000. This can be particularly useful if a provider goes into insolvency before you receive the goods or services. There are some exclusions, so please check. Section 75 even applies when you use your card overseas. It's also worth noting you only have to have paid a small amount of the total cost on your credit card for you to be protected.

Wedding insurance

Double check to see if your travel arrangements and personal belongings would be insured if anything went wrong. Some companies offer special insurance packages just for overseas weddings, which can cover anything from lost ceremonial attire to venues cancelling at the last minute.

Choose the perfect time of year

In the UK, most couples opt for spring or summer weddings as it's more likely to be warm and sunny. The luxury of getting married abroad means you have far more choice of when to say 'I do'. Here's a quick guide on the best times of year to get married abroad.

	 Best time to go	 Best time to avoid
ANTIGUA, BARBADOS, ST LUCIA, JAMAICA	November to April	June to October
EUROPE	May to September	December to February
USA - HAWAII, LAS VEGAS	March and April, October and November	August and September
MAURITIUS	April and June and between September and December	January & February (Wet season)
MEXICO	October to May	June to September (Wet season)
BALI	January and February, October to December	September
SRI LANKA	NORTH - April to September SOUTH - December to March	NORTH - December to March SOUTH - April to September
KENYA	January and February	March to May (Wet season)

Remember, if you're inviting children to the wedding, parents will need to get written permission from their school's head teacher for their child to take time off during term time.

Sort out the paperwork

Every country has its own set of rules, regulations and requirements. Once you have chosen your wedding venue, your first step is to contact the local authority. You can find this information from the [The Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#). You can also check the legal requirements of the country you wish to get married in via the [Marriage Abroad tool](#).



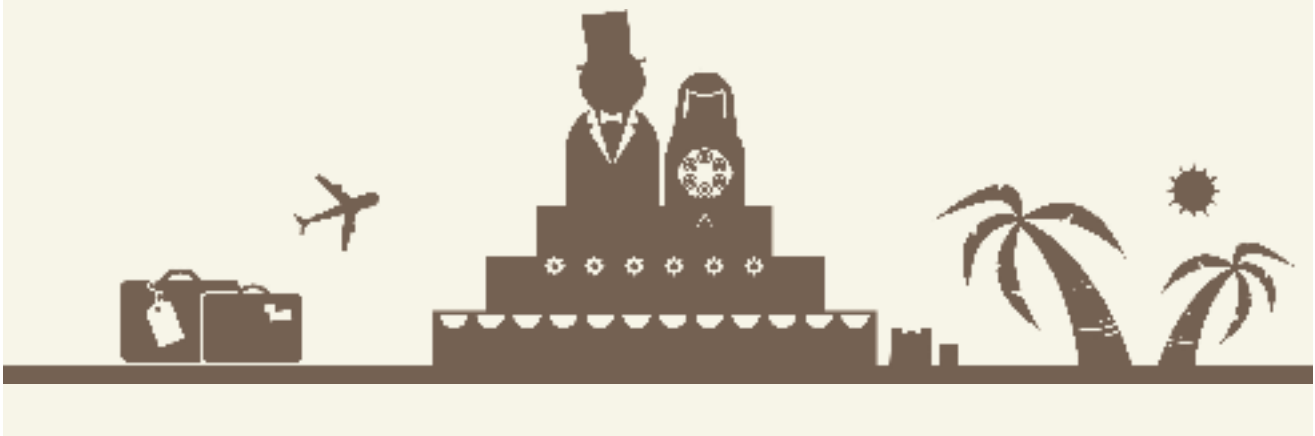
Our checklist can help you with the process of applying to get married abroad.

- Get copies of required certificates. This could include the bride and groom's birth certificate, divorce absolute or evidence of any name changes by deed poll.

- Find out if you need to make any declarations in the UK prior to travel, this may include making a statutory declaration before a solicitor or notary public that you can marry.

- Apply to get married in good time. Some venues require to see copies of documents up to 12 weeks in advance, so it's best to research this thoroughly.

- [Pay online for your Certificate of No Impediment CNI](#) - if you're getting married abroad you may be asked to prove that you are single or allowed to marry. In Italy, the document is known as Nulla Osta.



Sort out the paperwork

- Confirm your marriage will be legally recognised in the UK, if not consider getting married before you go and having a blessing abroad instead.

- Check that you will comply with the 'minimum residency period' of your chosen country. See section 1 above for information on residency laws.

- Check there aren't any additional requirements. For example, those marrying in Mexico and several states in the USA are required by law to take a blood test.

- Check whether you or your guests need a travel or holiday visa via the [Visa Central](#) website. Do you need any immunisations?

- Find out if you will need any documents translated, for example your birth certificate, certificate of no impediment or your marriage certificate. You can find a translator via the [Institute of Linguists](#).

Please also note this is not a fully comprehensive list and there may be additional requirements.



Plan the big day

Now you've chosen a country, narrowed down potential venues, set a budget and familiarised yourself with the legal requirements, the fun part begins - it's time to plan the big day itself! Here is a useful timeline for planning your perfect overseas wedding:



- **Sort out your ceremony.** Contact your consulate to start discussing the legal requirements. Check for visa requirements and book immunisations. Will you need to meet with your officiant prior to your ceremony and make arrangements for travel?
- **Research accommodation and flight options.** Look at flight details from a range of airports. Find hotels, b&bs, villas and apartments so your guests have a choice of where to stay. Make enquires as to availability and make block bookings to save money.
- **Send save the date cards** - the sooner your guests know the date, the sooner they can book time off work and start saving up for plane tickets! It is worth thinking about what information your guests might need and include it at this stage, so bookings can be made in advance.
- **Consider setting up a wedding website** for your guests, with all the details of your wedding. You can include all the options for flights and hotels, as well as visas, weather and childcare.
- **Research and book your photographer and videographer.** Will the venue provide one? Do you want to use someone local or from the UK? Photographers can be booked up to a year in advance.

Plan the big day



- **Arrange flowers, food and entertainment.** If you are buying flowers from a local vendor you might not be able to get the flowers you'd like or they might need to be imported. This can cost more and take longer for the flowers to arrive.
- **Start looking for a dress,** an outfit for the groom, and for other members of your wedding party. If you're getting married in an exotic climate, think about a lightweight style dress to ensure you are not too hot on the big day.
- **Reserve accommodation and book flights.** Make sure your luggage allowance is sufficient for your needs. It is often cheaper to buy this in advance than at the airport. Don't forget to think about how you are going to get the dress to your location. Some people opt to carry their dress on the plane as hand luggage, while others choose to buy **a plane seat just for their dress**. Contact your airline to make the necessary arrangements.
- **Book local transportation.** How will your guests get to the venue? Do you need to book taxis or a coach?
- **Check your passport is up to date** so you can travel back to the UK after your honeymoon.



- **Confirm final arrangements** with your venue and officiant.
- **Check RSVPs** and contact anyone who hasn't replied, you don't want the worry of any last minute extra guests.



- **Contact your mobile phone provider** to check your phone will work abroad, arrange cheaper calls and data. You may make a lot of phone calls both to venues and guests and you don't want a huge bill on your return.
- **Print out copies** of all contracts, phone numbers and addresses.

Plan the big day



- **Visit the consulate** or town hall to pick up your marriage licence and confirm the paperwork.
- **Meet your wedding planner or venue** to discuss any last minute changes. Hand over favours, table plans and any other decorations you have brought with you.
- **Greet your guests, and enjoy!**

Please also note this is not a fully comprehensive list and there may be additional requirements.



<http://www.kuoni.co.uk/weddings-abroad>
<https://www.gov.uk/marriage-abroad/y>
<http://www.weddingsite.co.uk/tools/wedding-budget-planner>
<http://www.google.co.uk/weddings/plan.html>
<http://www.skyscanner.net/>
<http://www.topcashback.co.uk/>
<http://www.quidco.com/>
<http://www.sainsburysbank.co.uk/money-matters/guide-to-proposals.shtml>
<http://www.sainsburysbank.co.uk/loans/wedding-loans.shtml>
<http://www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights/regulation/section-75-of-the-consumer-credit-act>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office>
<https://www.gov.uk/marriage-abroad/y>
<https://www.gov.uk/pay-foreign-marriage-certificates>
<http://visacentral.co.uk/visa-quick-check.php>
<http://www.iol.org.uk/linguist/translator1.asp?r=PCTXYL10046>
<http://www.ryanair.com/en/questions/can-i-carry-my-wedding-dress-in-the-aircraft-cabin/>

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