

## GETTING MARRIED IN FRANCE

Note: The French legal system requires that civil marriages take place in a French *mairie* (City Hall). Therefore, marriages cannot be performed within the Embassy or within a French Consulate in the U.S.

### Civil Ceremony

All marriages must be performed by a French civil authority before any religious ceremony takes place. The mayor can authorize the deputy mayor or a city councilor to perform the ceremony in the town in which one of the parties to be married has resided for at least 40 days preceding the marriage. These requirements cannot be waived.

### Religious Ceremony

The religious ceremony has to be performed after the civil ceremony (never before). The minister, priest or rabbi will require a certificate of civil marriage before any religious ceremony takes place.

### Publications of Banns

French Law requires the posting of marriage banns at the appropriate *mairie* no less than 10 days preceding the date of marriage. The first publication of the banns can be made only at the end of the 30 days of residence in France by one party to the marriage.

### Marriage Certificate

Couples married in France receive a *livret de famille*. This is a booklet which serves as an official record of marriage and subsequent events in the family such as births, deaths, divorce or name changes. A marriage certificate can be obtained by writing to the *mairie* where the marriage took place.

### Documents Required

Note: Most *mairies* require these basic documents:

- A valid U.S. passport or a French resident permit
- A birth certificate (less than three months old)
- A [certificate of celibacy](#) (less than three months old) which can be done before an American Consular Officer in France
- An [affidavit of Law](#). It is a statement (must be done by an attorney licensed to practice in both France and United States) about U.S. marriage laws, certifying that the American citizen is free to contract marriage in France and will be recognized in the United States
- A medical certificate (less than three months old) Proof of domicile (electricity bill, etc.)
- *Certificat du notaire* (if the parties to the marriage opt for a prenuptial contract)