

Marriage in Japan

Can I Get Married While Serving in Japan?

Yes. Marriage in Japan consists of a civil marriage registration at a Japanese municipal government office "city hall". Only this civil registration constitutes a legal marriage in Japan. Religious and other special ceremonies, while permitted, do not constitute a legal marriage.

Army personnel do not need command permission before getting married. Normally, you must have at least 12 months left in Japan to be approved for command sponsorship. Please check with your unit S-1 or personnel office with questions about command sponsorship.

Who Can Get Married in Japan?

Under Japanese law, you must meet the following requirement to get married.

You and your partner must be 18 years of age or older.

In addition, for Americans, you must be able to legally marry in your home state; if the legal age of marriage at home is 18, you cannot marry earlier than that in Japan.

Currently, same sex marriage is not accepted in Japan.

Getting Married

Once all the paperwork is prepared (see below), proceed to the appropriate Japanese municipal government office. If one party is Japanese, you can use the city hall or ward office where the Japanese citizen's address register is maintained. A SOFA member may also use the Zama City Hall if they reside on Camp Zama or Sagamihara City Hall if they reside on Sagamihara Family Housing Area or Sagami Depot. If both are non-Japanese, both parties go to the city hall nearest their residence with someone fluent in Japanese and English.

Upon completing all steps, the municipal government office issues a Japanese language "Certificate of Acceptance of Notification of Marriage" (婚姻受理証明書 Kon-in Todoke Juri Shomeisho). This is proof of a legal Japanese marriage.

You are now legally married. There are two versions of the "Certificate Acceptance of Notification of Marriage", small and large version. The smaller version cost 350 Yen and the larger version cost 1400 Yen (price are subject to change). You may want to get several copies of the small certificate to keep for your records. Write down the name and address of the municipal government office that registered your marriage, as you'll need to contact them directly in the future to obtain proof of your marriage.

If one party is Japanese, they will get a New Family Registry (新戸籍 Shin Koseki) showing the marriage and it usually takes one week to be issued.

Documents Needed:

Proof of Nationality: A passport is recommended because translation is not necessary. However, Birth Certificate, Certificate of Naturalization, Consular Report of Birth Abroad, or Certificate of Citizenship are also acceptable with translation.

Affidavit of Competency to Marry (for SOFA members): The form is available at the Legal Assistance Office and must be notarized. Japanese translation is necessary, however, need not be notarized as long as the translator indicates their name with the imprint of their personal seal (Hanko) or signature for non-Japanese. The name of spelling and signature of the affidavit must match with the ones on the proof of nationality (usually the passport).

Marriage Registration Form (Konin Todoke): This can be picked up at the city hall or ward office where you are registering your marriage. Two witnesses of any nationality over 18 years old must sign this document. Generally non-Japanese witnesses will sign, while Japanese, Korean, and Chinese national witnesses may be asked for their personal seal (Hanko). Non-Japanese witnesses are required to show their valid passport.

Family register must be current: If the city hall you're submitting your documents to is different than where your Japanese fiancé's family register is maintained.

Form of ID: The city hall officer will ask you to present your ID card to verify that the submitter's name matches the names on the marriage registration form. Please bring an ID card such as your CAC card, passport, driver's license, resident card, etc. Fiancé

Translations:

Required documents for City Hall must be presented with clear and complete translations into Japanese. Translations are the responsibility of the parties getting married. A list of fee-based translators is available at the Legal Assistance Office in case you cannot find anyone to translate your documents. Military One Source provides free translation services to eligible users. Please check your eligibility status and types of documents which can be translated.

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/language-services/>

For the American Partner

All foreigners who marry in Japan must first prepare a sworn **Affidavit of Competency to Marry** (婚姻要件具備証明書 Konin Yoken Gubi Shomeisho), affirming they are legally free to marry. This form is available in the Legal Assistance Office. The form must be translated into Japanese. You may translate the document yourself or ask for a list of translators at the Legal Assistance Office. If your fiancé is American, she/he must also complete a sworn Affidavit of Competency to Marry.

For Other Foreign Partners residing in Japan

If your partner is neither Japanese nor American, they should contact their embassy for any country specific marriage requirements. Some countries require back-home records checks and waiting periods.

- If your partner is a resident card holder in Japan, s/he needs to bring the **Resident Card** (在留カード Zairyu Ka-do). A Resident Card is issued by the Immigration Bureau in Japan. The certified copy of **Residential Registration Certificate** (住民票 Jyumin Hyo) is also needed to prove the current domicile.
- If your partner is on special permanent resident status in Japan (特別永住者 Tokubetsu Eijyusha), s/he needs to obtain **Special Permanent Resident Certificate** (特別永住者証明書 Tokubetsu Eijyu-sha Shomeisho). This certificate is issued by the city hall where her/his current address is registered.

- For the non-Japanese foreign fiancé, please ask their Embassy about how to request and complete an **Affidavit of Competency to Marry** for their home country.

Witnesses

You will need two witnesses to sign the marriage registration form. Non-Japanese witnesses are required to show their valid passports. The names and signatures on the marriage registration form must exactly match those on the passports. If your witnesses are not available to accompany you to the city hall, make sure to have photocopies of their passports.

Non-Japanese couples should bring a translator, as city hall employees might not speak English.

After You are Married

You need to have someone translate your Certificate of Acceptance of Notification of Marriage into English. If your partner is a Japanese national, you need to translate a new family register into English also. Please remember to include the translator's certification with the translated document.

You must also present your Certificate of Acceptance of Notification of Marriage to your command to initiate command sponsorship and logistical support.

Please be aware that the city hall/ward office that processed your marriage is the only office that can issue a certified copy of your Certificate of Acceptance of Marriage. Currently, Zama city hall does not mail it abroad.

Scan the QR codes below with your smartphone to go directly to our websites.

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USARJ LAO Website



Ice Comment



Marriage in Japan is distributed by the Camp Zama Legal Assistance Office, located in Building 101, Room CE209. Our office hours are 0830 to 1630 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesday, 0830 to 1200. You may call us for an appointment at DSN 262-4698 or commercial 046-407-4698.