

Getting Married in the British Virgin Islands

This guide looks at the steps and procedures that need to be taken in order to be married in the British Virgin Islands (**BVI**). Both the bride and groom are required to be present in person at the Registrar-Generals Office, where the application form will be completed.

Marriage in the BVI is governed by the Marriage Act (the Act).

In order to get married in the BVI, the couple will first need to obtain a Marriage Licence. The process can be facilitated in one of two ways:

- prior to your arrival in the BVI or visit to the Registrar-General's office, by online submission of your information and by completing an online application through the Government's Civil Registry Information System (CRIS) at www.crisvi.gov.vg and thereafter, visiting the Registrar-General's office for completion of the application process, or
- by physically visiting and applying to the Registrar-General's office which is located on the first floor of Sakal Building, Road Town, Tortola, BVI. The office opening hours are 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday, however the Office's cut off time for receiving payments is 3pm.

Applying online

The application process online is more geared towards facilitating and securing a date for the ceremony and the Marriage Officer's/Registrar-General's availability to officiate the ceremony.

The online application process is as follows:

- (a) Once the application is submitted online, it is submitted to the Marriage Officer, who will be notified that it is available for review. The online application must be reviewed by a Marriage Officer* before it can be submitted to the Registrar-General's Office for approval
- (b) You may submit the application to a Marriage Officer of your choice, including the Registrar-General
- (c) The Marriage Officer will electronically approve or deny the ceremony details and you will be informed of the result via email. If your application is approved by the Marriage Officer, you will receive a Priority Number

A list of Marriage Officers in the BVI can be obtained by contacting the lawyer listed at the end of this guide. In addition to the Registrar-General's Office, this list includes Marriage Officers (ministers of religion appointed as Marriage Officers), and Civil Marriage Officers (persons deemed fit and proper by the Governor to act in that capacity).

- (d) Upon receipt of the Priority Number, you will need to insert that number and the groom's last name on the online website (under the application for marriage licence tab) in order to verify and print the application. This process will electronically submit the application information to the Registrar-General's office. You may then submit the application in person and any required supporting documents to the Registrar-General's office for approval, signing and witnessing

As indicated above, although the Registrar-General will have your information from the online application, the Registrar-General's office requires both the groom and bride to be present in person to fill out the forms to ensure that there is no element of coercion.

Physical application

Both the bride and groom are required to be present in person at the Registrar-Generals Office, where the application form will be completed. You are required to have present with you the required documentation as outlined below and also two witnesses.

In the application, you would have to indicate the following:

- (i) whether the application is for a licence or a special licence;
- (ii) the first and other names and surnames of both parties, and their profession or occupation, permanent address and address at the time of making the application if it is not their permanent address;
- (iii) whether the marriage is to be solemnised or celebrated by a Marriage Officer, Civil Marriage Officer or Registrar-General, and if by a Marriage Officer, the place where and the Marriage Officer by whom the marriage is to be solemnised;
- (iv) whether the parties or either of them has or have been previously married;
- (v) that they know of no impediment of kindred or alliance or other lawful cause to prevent the proposed marriage;
- (vi) that one of the parties, for the space of 15 days immediately preceding the licence has had his or her usual place of abode within the Territory, or that one of the parties, in the case of a special licence, for the space of one day immediately preceding such application for special licence had his or her usual place of abode in the Territory; and
- (vii) that the consent of the persons whose consent to such marriage is required (under the Act) has been obtained.

Types of licences

- (a) **Ordinary Licence:** This licence is available if you have been resident in the Virgin Islands for 15 days or more prior to the application for the licence.
- (b) **Special Licence:** This licence can be obtained if you are in the Virgin Islands for at least one day prior to the application. You must be present at the time of the application and plan to be resident/present in the Virgin Islands for at least one day.

Requirements

In order to obtain a Marriage Licence, the following are required:

- (i) Passports – as proof of identity and date of arrival in the BVI
- (ii) Proof of marital status (original or a certified copy of the divorce decree for divorced spouses or Death Certificate of deceased spouse)
Previous marriage certificate (if applicable)
Affidavits as proof of Identity if applicable, for example, where the names on the proof of identity document and the divorce decree do not match.
- (iii) Letter from the pastor/officiating Marriage Officer indicating that they will be officiating the marriage ceremony (if not the Registrar-General)
- (iv) Two persons to witness (and to sign) your application for the licence. These witnesses need not be the witnesses who will be present at your Marriage Ceremony
- (v) US\$220 (US\$200 in postage stamps and a processing fee of US\$20) for a Special Licence or US\$120 (US\$100 in postage stamps and a processing fee of US\$20) for an Ordinary Licence (These fees are for licences only and do not include any additional fees for location of the ceremony or the officiating of the same by the authorised person). See below for information on additional fees.

All documents above must be originals or certified as true copies of originals. Postage stamps can be purchased at the Civil Registry and Passport Office. All cheques should be made payable to the Accountant General.

Processing

A marriage licence takes three (3) working days. If you are in a rush, you may be able to obtain a Special Marriage Licence which takes one (1) working day to process.

Validity

Once a licence is granted, it is valid for three (3) months from the date it is issued, and it is issued for a specific Marriage Officer and Marriage Ceremony venue.

Additional Fees

The Registrar-General may perform a civil marriage at the Registrar-General's Office for a fee of US\$460 (inclusive of the US\$120 fee for an ordinary licence, and in addition US\$220 for the Registrar-General or marriage officer to perform the ceremony, US\$120 for the ceremony to be held in the Civil Registry Building). If the ceremony is to be officiated outside of the Registrar-General's Office at a location of your choice (within reason), there is a fee of US\$220. There is also a fee of US\$75 for late arrival for a wedding outside the office conducted by the Registrar-General.

If you desire to conduct the ceremony at a church, you would need to contact the church of your preference. Please note that the church may have additional requirements and may charge additional fees.

Solemnisation and celebration

The Marriage shall be solemnised by a Marriage Officer or a Civil Marriage Officer between the hours of 6am and 8pm. If the marriage shall be celebrated by the Registrar-General in his office, it should be solemnised between the hours of 8:30am and 4:30pm on Mondays to Fridays, except holidays (including Christmas Day and Good Friday). Two or more credible witnesses besides the officiating official should be present.



For more information and key contacts please visit [harneys.com](https://www.harneys.com)

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