

## **Labyrinths**

For thousands of years, labyrinths have been used in many different cultures around the world. Today, they offer a chance to take "time out" from our busy lives, to leave schedules and stress behind. Walking a labyrinth is a gift we give to ourselves that leads us past our intellect to a deeper place within.

The labyrinth represents our passage through time and experience. Its many turns reflect the journey of life, which involves changes of direction, transition, some uncertainty but also discovery and achievement. Different from a maze (which has dead ends and false passages), the labyrinth has a single path that repeatedly comes close to the centre then back out to the perimeter before it finally reaches the centre. It shows us that no time or effort is ever wasted; if we stay the course, every step, however circuitous, however distant it seems, takes us closer to our goal.

The very act of walking with intention has a healing effect on the body, mind and spirit. Thinking is not required to walk a labyrinth. At the same time, one must remain alert to stay on the path. This combination of reduced mental activity and heightened awareness makes the labyrinth ideal for walking meditation or prayer. The turns of the labyrinth are thought to balance the two hemispheres of the brain, resulting in physical and emotional healing. As reaching the centre is assured, walking the labyrinth is more about the journey than the destination, about being rather than doing, integrating body and mind, psyche and spirit into one harmonious whole.

## **The Baltic Wheel Labyrinth**

The Baltic Wheel Labyrinth is believed to have evolved in Scandinavia and northern Germany, principally around the shorelines of the Baltic sea. Many of these old, stone labyrinths are said to have been built by fishermen, who walked through them in the hope of a good catch and a safe return. They have also been linked to fertility and the birth of a new life.



The labyrinth has 2 mouths, creating a short and a long entrance giving walkers various options. You can go directly in and back out again. Or follow the longer path bringing you into the centre then out again. Or you can enter by one path and leave by the other. Each choice has its own significance for your life and your journey.

## **The Garden labyrinth**

Our labyrinth is a 44m Baltic Wheel Labyrinth, built out of slate from the land. The centre has been created from an existing rocky outcrop, to which we have added stones, crystals, statues and beautiful aloes, also from the land. Because it is a “living” labyrinth, it will look and feel different at different times of year, and so we invite you to explore walking it during different seasons, as well as at different times of day. Because we have worked with existing natural features, our labyrinth is sloping, so walking each circuit involves some ups and downs; and some sections are rocky, while others are smooth. It reminds us that uphill and rocky sections in life are balanced by downhills and smooth stretches – sometimes all that is required is to maintain awareness and carry on walking.



## **How to walk a labyrinth**

There are no strict "rules" for walking a labyrinth. Be aware of your experience, your body, your thoughts, and feelings. Allow yourself to find your own pace. Listen to what you are being invited to release or surrender.

Some people like to set a specific intention for a labyrinth walk. Others may ask a question, being open to any insights that may emerge from the labyrinth. There are formal ways one can walk a 7-circuit labyrinth which relate to the 7 chakras, and/or the planets. Some like to use the inner journey to let go of what no longer serves them, and the outer to focus on what they would like to bring back into their lives. Still others prefer to simply walk and see what experiences the labyrinth brings up.

Whatever way you choose to walk, we invite you to take a few minutes before entering the labyrinth to transition from everyday life to the labyrinth experience. Focus on your breathing, still your mind, and set an intention/ question if you choose to do so. Pause at the entrance to acknowledge and honour the start of your walk. Walk mindfully, pausing whenever you need to, and let go of any mental focus on reaching the centre. You may pass people or let others step around you at the turns. Spend as long as you would like in the centre; this is a place to relax, pray, meditate, journal and enjoy the stillness. When you are ready, begin the journey outward. Try to resist the temptation to rush or feel that the labyrinth walk is “done” now you have left the centre; this too is a part of the walk. Again, pause whenever you need to. Take a moment when leaving the labyrinth to reflect on the walk, notice any insights which may have arisen and give thanks for the experience.