

## What is a labyrinth?

- Labyrinths are not mazes –
  - Mazes can have multiple entrances and exits
  - Mazes can have several paths from which to choose
  - Mazes usually do not have centers
  - Mazes can have intersecting paths
  - Mazes can have dead-ends or cul-do-sacs
  - Mazes are constructed to challenge the mind
- Labyrinths are similar to spirals
  - Spirals usually have only one entrance and exit
  - Spirals have only one path and a center area
  - Spirals do not have intersecting paths
  - Spirals do not have dead ends
  - Spirals do not challenge the mind
  - Spirals do not have changes in direction
- Labyrinths are singular paths that meander inward to a center area
  - They have only one entrance and exit
  - They have only one path to follow and a center area
  - They do not have intersecting paths, dead ends, or cul-de-sacs
  - They DO have changes in direction
  - They are NOT built to challenge the mind – they help to quiet the mind
- Labyrinths help quiet the mind:
  - Through the consciousness of “walking” and noticing the repetition of our steps
  - Through the balancing of the right and left brain functions from the path’s ever changing direction
  - Through the focusing of the mind and the blocking out of outer and inner disturbances
  - Through the discharge of excess psychic energy through the body’s movement and ground
  - Through the creation of a ‘sacred place’ where the psyche can meet the soul

Things to consider –

1. Leave your baggage at the door
2. Have a mantra or a question in mind, but be ready to accept the answer the labyrinth gives you
3. There is no wrong way to walk a labyrinth, if you don’t have an epiphany or revelation, that’s perfectly normal
4. Relax

## Origin of the Labyrinth:

The absolute origin is really unknown but the first indications of the use of labyrinths and mazes date back as long as 4,500 years ago. They have come and gone in many shapes and sizes with the earliest applications found on Cretan coins and pottery. They have been found in many cultures at many different times in man's history such as in:

- A labyrinth was found carved into the remains of the ancient walls of the city of Pompeii
- Roman mosaic labyrinths surrounded by fortified walls protected the center of the cities of the Roman empire
- In medieval Europe the labyrinth was used as a symbol of Christian faith, the one true path to salvation
- The Meander Pattern, or Greek Key, found as a border on this page, goes back way into our prehistoric past. When extended, this pattern forms a labyrinth
- The most famous labyrinth, of course, is the one in Knossos, on the Eastern Mediterranean island of Crete. Here King Minos constructed the famous labyrinth that held his monster son, the Minotaur. This is the story of Theseus, the most famous human hero in Greek mythology. Sent on a mission to defeat the Minoans, after receiving the "clew" from Ariadne, Theseus unrolled a ball of yarn as he descended into the monster's lair. This actually was a maze not a labyrinth. The Greeks didn't realize that there was a difference between the two, that's the confusion.
- The earliest recorded labyrinth was found in C.1200 BCE, in King Nestor palace Pylos Southern Greece. Nestor fought with Agamemnon at Troy. Many labyrinths in Northern Europe are called Troytown, Walls of Troy, Trojaberg (in Sweden). Caerdria, the leading English language magazine on labyrinths means "hill of turning" or "hill of Troy."
- Chartres Cathedral in France has one of the most famous labyrinths in the world. For centuries, the labyrinth has been used by Christians to represent the pilgrimage to the holy land, the journey of Christian life (birth, life, death, and afterlife) and the one true path of God. Many see the labyrinth as a birthing instrument. There were 272 stones used in the construction of this labyrinth - the same as the average number of days in the human gestation period.
- There are more full-sized labyrinths in Sweden, Finland and Estonia than anywhere else in the world. They were primarily built by fishermen who walked these labyrinths before going fishing to ensure a good wind and a good catch.
- Typical/Classical style labyrinths were walked by fishermen as recently as 1900 CE for good luck before going fishing in the Baltic. They were also used to keep the pesky trolls from going fishing with them. The fishermen would walk in slowly, with the trolls following. Then the fishermen would run out and jump in their boats. The trolls couldn't figure out how to get out fast enough, and would be left behind.
- The Native Americans of the SouthWest (O'odahm and Hopi) use a labyrinth that is essentially identical to the classical seven circuit labyrinth. This O'odahm example is called "the Man in the Maze."

## 101 Ways of Walking a Labyrinth

- Free Style – People come and walk and take away whatever they get. They may leave relaxed, centered, with a sense of peace, or a new insight.
- The Journey of Life – A fundamental approach to the labyrinth is a life’s journey. With this in mind, you may wish to consider this quote from Caroline Adams:
  - “Your life is a sacred journey. And it is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. You are on the path... exactly where you are meant to be right now... And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing, of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity, and of love.”
- Labyrinths for Team Building – People who work together on a common task, those who compose a team, can benefit from examining how they work together. How do they cooperate or fail to cooperate? How do their joint efforts help them to reach the goal?
- For Joy and Celebration – Sometimes people approach the labyrinth too seriously. It can and should be done this way sometimes, but walking a labyrinth is also joyous. People may need to be reminded of this. It is a great tradition to begin for celebrations such as: New Years Eve, a celebration of life or joy, a new baby, a wedding or an engagement.
- Labyrinths of compassion – Walking a labyrinth, we circle to the center of our lives. Sometimes that journey is through loss towards grief, as we seek consolation and comfort. Letting go is required. The path of the labyrinth can take us towards release, acceptance, and compassion. The walk can help with, grief, loss and letting go, a memorial or compassion.
- For Healing – In many ways the labyrinth represents the journey to healing. Healing is not only physical but also occurs on the emotional, mental, and spiritual levels. A physical healing is often described as a cure. While a cure might not be possible, healing is always an option. To be healed means to be made whole, and wholeness is fundamentally a psychological and spiritual process of finding meaning. The labyrinth can be used as a tool of healing to help people find meaning in their suffering.
- Christianity – Labyrinths may be used in many Christian rituals such as Communion, the Eucharist, Christmas and Easter
- Judaism – The labyrinth could be walked as the Wandering in the Wilderness, Journey of Joseph, or the Flight from Egypt
- Chakra Walk – The classical labyrinth with its 7 paths can be correlated with the seven charkas of Eastern thought. A Chakra is an energy vortex in the body often pictured as a spinning wheel of light. These energy centers can become clogged in their function, and energy flow is disrupted. The Labyrinth can balance these energy flows.

- Hello and Goodbye – The labyrinth can become the container for the emotions of parting and provide a safe and sacred place to share those feelings. It may also be a warm welcome to a group.

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Labyrinth Resources:

**Internet Locations:**

<http://www.paxworks.com/sealedwithin.html>

<http://home.speedfactory.net/bsp2323/georgialabyrinths.htm>

<http://www.angelfire.com/hi3/labyrinth/l2.html>

<http://www.paxworks.com/photos/Nativity.html>

<http://www.gracecathedral.org/church/tour/index.shtml>

<http://www.labyrinthproject.com/links.html#CHURCHES>

**Quotations to Consider (taken from the PAXworks website):**

**The Old Testament**

Is 2:5 Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Is 26:7 The path of the righteous is level; O upright One, you make the way of the righteous smooth.

Is 42:16 I will lead the blind on their journey, by paths unknown I will guide them. .

Psalms 23 - A psalm of David. (entire)

Psalms 27:11 Show me your way, O Lord .

Psalms 32:8 I will instruct you and show you the way you should walk

Psalms 16:11 You will show me the path of life, fullness of joy is in your presence.

Psalms 73:23 Nevertheless I am always with you for you hold me by my right hand

Psalms 84:5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.

Psalms 119:35 Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

**From the rule of Benedict**

In His loving kindness, the Lord shows us the way of life.

Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly, Christ is received.

### **T.S. Eliot**

What we call the beginning is often the end, and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.

### **The New Testament**

Jn 14 :6 I am the way the truth and the life .

Jn 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."