

Labyrinths

Labyrinths are an ancient, symbolic art form which go back to ancient Egypt. Many religions, including Christianity, have taken them into their spiritual and prayer lives. There are labyrinths in some of the great Cathedrals of Europe, the earliest dating from the 11th century at Chartres.

What is a labyrinth? It is a guided symbolic, meditative “journey” into the “centre” of ourselves. Labyrinths can be “walked”, or the journey can be traced with a finger or coloured pen, or traced in sand. It can even be travelled mentally, with no body movement.

Labyrinths are complex, geometric designs which are one long path which always leads one to the centre and always leads one back out to the beginning. They are not like a maze, which intends to trick and confuse and get us lost. There is no wrong way in a labyrinth, no going back!

Labyrinths consist of a complex pathway which lead us on a meandering journey, causing us to stop the daily routine and to slow down and walk unfamiliar ways and changing directions so that we can think about who we really are and what life is about.

In “life size” labyrinths, there are often “stations” placed along the way to guide us to think about life and ourselves and our search for meaning in life. They are something nice to “stroll” in- like a well laid out garden.

We can trust labyrinths: they are there to guide us to the centre, not to get us lost. And when we get to the centre, we stop and ponder the great mysteries of the universe: it is a still point in our turning world. It is a quiet moment when all the complex paths of life are “out there” and we have “time out” to rest awhile. Then we re-enter the fray and make our way out again!

We never rush labyrinths: there is no hurry: they are meant to be walked slowly and meditatively.

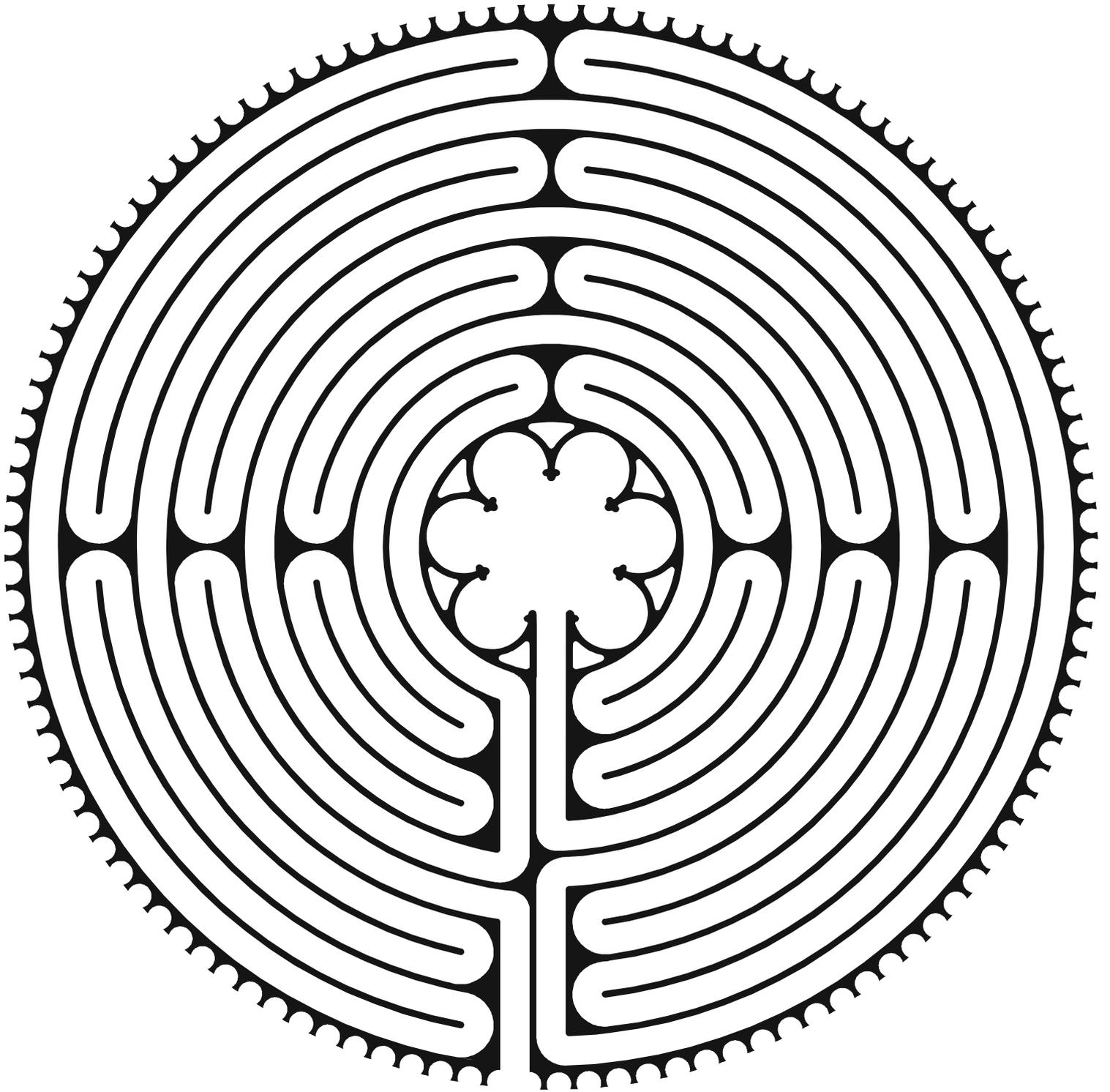
Before we begin, let's centre ourselves with centred breathing and relaxing our bodies. Then we will be ready to begin.

After strolling through our labyrinth and returning to the start (with our finger and then a coloured pen), we stop and reflect on the experience.

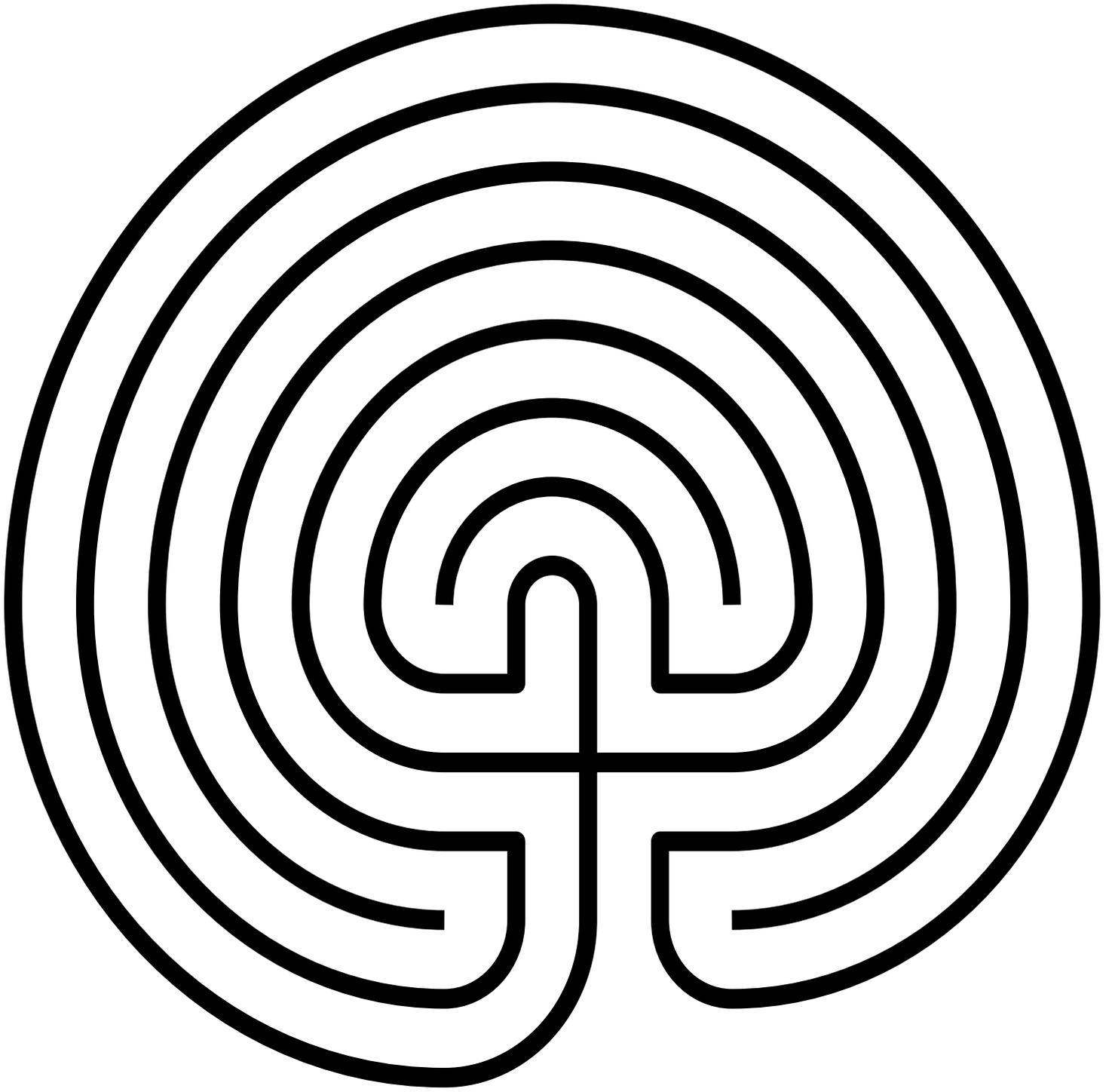
How calming an experience was it?

Have you? Would you ... like to actually walk a large labyrinth?

Could you imagine the stillness of being stopped at the centre, surrounded by the long and winding path?



Plan of the labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral
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"Classical" or "Cretan" design, well-known in antiquity.
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