

WELCOME TO CENTRAL PARK LABYRINTH

Discover this wonderful oasis for your mind, body and soul in the heart of Burlington. Walking the labyrinth can calm and restore a sense of balance to the body, mind and spirit.

Burlington's Central Park Labyrinth is an eleven-circuit labyrinth, patterned after the labyrinth at the Chartres Cathedral in France that dates back to the year 1200. The labyrinth is built from coloured concrete with the pattern added to the surface with a burnt sienna coloured concrete.



The Central Park Labyrinth is located in the northeast corner of Central Park across from the Rotary Youth Centre near the Guelph Line entrance to the park. Central Park Labyrinth is one of the first labyrinths in a public space and is one of the first wheelchair accessible labyrinths in all of Canada.

WHAT IS A LABYRINTH?

A labyrinth is an ancient, geometric pattern that has only one path that leads into the centre and out again. Not to be confused with a maze, a labyrinth was originally based on a circle, the ancient symbol for healing, unity and wholeness. A maze offers a choice of paths, dead ends and false starts; it is our cognitive mind (left brain) that loves to problem solve. Walking the labyrinth involves the creative and intuitive mind (right brain) and can be calming and balancing. The choice is whether to walk the labyrinth - a spiritual journey.

A labyrinth may be round, square or octagonal, laid out on a floor or outdoors. Some labyrinths are painted on wooden floors while others are painted on canvas and laid out in temporary spaces. Outdoor labyrinths may be made of concrete, brick, stones, gravel, wood chips or mown grass.

HISTORY OF LABYRINTHS

Labyrinths have existed for thousands of years. Labyrinths of pre-Christian Knossos and Egypt were followed by labyrinths in European cathedrals. The best-known labyrinth design is from the 13th century, and is laid on the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France. That labyrinth, which still exists today, was one of many that appeared in abbeys and cathedrals across Europe.



WHY DO PEOPLE WALK THE LABYRINTH?

They walk the labyrinth:

- To celebrate
- To grieve
- To seek insight
- To slow down
- For the health benefits.

HOW TO WALK THE LABYRINTH

There is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth, but here are some suggestions to make your journey more fulfilling.

1. Before you start, take a few deep breaths and some quiet time for yourself to let go of any tension. Set an intention for your journey through the labyrinth. If you wish, say a prayer and ask your feet to bless the earth with each step you take.
2. Let your body naturally set the pace as you proceed into the labyrinth. Go slowly and reverently, or quickly and playfully - whatever pace with which you are most comfortable.
3. There is only one entrance, with one path to the centre and out again. The twists and turns of the labyrinth lead you to the centre and back. Follow the path until you return to the starting point again.

BENEFITS OF A LABYRINTH

Research conducted by Dr. Herbert Benson at Harvard Medical School's Mind/Body Medical Institute has found that focused walking meditations are highly effective at reducing anxiety and eliciting what Dr. Benson refers to as the relaxation response.

Regularly eliciting the relaxation response can result in:

- Lowering blood pressure
- Lowering breathing rates
- Reducing incidents of chronic pain
- Reducing insomnia and
- Improving fertility.



4. You may carefully pass others who are moving more slowly or step aside to let others pass you.
5. If you are inclined to pause at a given spot, do so. Time spent in the labyrinth is a special time for you, so do what you feel you need to. If you want to leave the labyrinth at any time without completing the path, simply walk out across the lines.
6. Spend time at the centre, as it can be a place for meditation and prayer. Stay there as long as you like or simply experience the centre as a turning point. Please make room for others as they arrive.
7. Once you have finished walking the labyrinth reflect on your walk. For some writing down their thoughts is helpful. Share your experience with someone or listen to someone else's story about his or her journey.

The labyrinth provides a feeling of openness and connectedness with yourself and others.

"The simple experience of walking the labyrinth invites us back into the centre of our being."

CENTRAL PARK LABYRINTH COMMUNITY GROUP

The Central Park Labyrinth Community Group was founded and created by Justine Giuliani. A group of Burlington residents from the ages of four to 75 led by Justine, an accomplished artist and certified labyrinth facilitator, created a meditative sanctuary as a Millennium Project in Burlington's Central Park in 1999. This temporary labyrinth was created of mulch and river rock and was a copy of the Cretan Labyrinth in Greece. The temporary labyrinth was open from October, 1999 until August, 2003.



The permanent Central Park Labyrinth made of coloured concrete officially opened on May 14, 2005.

After experiencing a personal loss in her family, Justine has been inspired to spread the use of the labyrinth as a healing, meditative and creative concept. This led Justine influenced by her artist background to create a public art installation - Central Park Labyrinth for the City of Burlington.



The vision of Central Park Labyrinth Community Group, in partnership with The Ontario Trillium Foundation through the Burlington Bereavement Resource Council (BBRC) and the City of Burlington, was to build a greater sense of community and provide a place of peace, healing and beauty in an urban area. This project was possible because of the work of many volunteers, committee members and significant financial contributions from individuals and corporations in our community.

Please visit Central Park to experience it. Take the labyrinth journey and see what you can discover about yourself, your community and your place in the world.

DONATIONS ARE WELCOME

Please help to maintain Central Park Labyrinth.

All donations are gratefully appreciated. Income tax receipts are provided for donations of \$25 or more. Please make your cheque payable to the City of Burlington - Central Park Labyrinth and send to:

The City of Burlington
Parks and Recreation Department
P.O. Box 5013
Burlington, ON L7R 3Z6

For more information about the Central Park Labyrinth, please visit the City of Burlington website at www.burlington.ca.

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