

Island Pilgrim's Celtic pilgrimages



High Crosses on Iona, Scotland and at Clonmacnoise, Ireland.



What is a Celtic Christianity Pilgrimage. Our focus is early Celtic Christianity, and the whole background in which it developed. We spend time at monuments from the stone age, trying to understand the lives and spirituality of our ancestors 5,000 years ago. We seek to understand how Christianity was received when it first reached beyond the centralized military structure of the Roman Empire. We try to see how Christianity embraced, adopted and blended with, or adapted to, the spirituality already strongly present in the Celtic islands. We look at architecture, art, geography and literature to try to see into the minds and souls of those remarkable men and women. Then we try to see what we have inherited from them. We ask how Christianity reached these islands, and how it spread. We walk to and through the monastic sites and tiny churches. We learn about the lives and faith of men and women who lived from the Stone Age to the coming of the large-scale, centralized continental churches and monastic orders. We listen to the words written in these isles when all the rest of Europe was in the "Dark Ages." In our worship, we borrow the words of these ancestors of our modern church.

Is this the right pilgrimage approach for you? We think, learn and discuss. And we enjoy ourselves. We enjoy relaxing. We enjoy the excellent restaurants. We delight in the spectacular landscape and seascape. We enjoy to full range of weather from hot summer days to wild and beautiful storms. We get wet, muddy, tired. It's all part of the experience. We love the peace and quiet of the retreat centres and the challenging humour of the nuns and friars. We delight in the music and camaraderie of the pubs.

The labyrinth, St. Columba's Bay, Iona.



First days. At the start of each pilgrimage, we share information about the pre-Christian past of these isles, early development of Christianity in the areas in which we will travel, and the process of trying to understand the past. We discuss the overall shape of the pilgrimage, and our individual hopes and concerns. We get to know each other. We continue this process as we travel together.



Talk time over superb pub and self-catered meals.

A "Pilgrim Rule" In the Celtic areas which we will visit in 2005, the influence of the Desert Fathers and Mothers was great. We see this in the importance of monasticism. In the early days of Celtic Christianity the monasteries were tiny and community based. Each monastery developed a "rule" to guide members in the furtherance of their relationship with God, each other and the wider world. As part of the preparation for 2005, we will develop a "rule" for each pilgrimage. We will make suggestions, circulate them to, and seek comments and suggestions from each person who is interested in joining the pilgrimage. In the monastic tradition of using the latest technology, we will do this by email or mail. Eventually we will agree on a draft to discuss at the start of the pilgrimage. As we travel, pray and talk together, we will modify the ideas and may eventually develop the first 21st century "pilgrim rule!"

Awe-inspiring island monasterie. Skellig Michael off the SW coast of Ireland.



*The nunnery on Iona:
peaceful energy.*



Illuminated manuscripts and High Crosses, produced when the rest of Europe was in the Dark Ages.

The Nuns' church at Clonmacnoise; exploration and friendship.



St. Beuno's with its 9th century font.



Looking from Mynyddmawr to the pilgrim island, Ynys Enlli (Bardsey) north Wales. Ready for the communion service in the ancient abbey.



Walking to the ruined abbey on Ynys Enlli.



Eager for Iona.



Pilgrims rest, back to the Abbey, heart of the modern Iona community's drive for Peace and Justice.