



Short practical guide for the modern pilgrim



**Walk of Wisdom
Foundation**

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The creativity of life

Rituals are a magnifying lens on what is important in life. This guide invites you to see through that lens. The guide is not an elaborate discourse on how to walk a pilgrimage, but an aid to open the shutters to your inner realm. What moves you there is the stuff that matters in your life; to know what matters in your life is to have access to the power and creativity that can shape it.

Sprouting power

The artists Huub and Adelheid Kortekaas designed a symbol especially for the Walk of Wisdom: *Pilgrim*. It depicts humanity as a seedling of the earth. Every human being has the capacity to flourish as a unique part of the unfolding story of life. To connect to this sprouting power within and the world around you, that is the art of living, according to Huub and Adelheid.

Luggage

Prof. Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck distinguishes five natural moments for reflection in a pilgrimage: preparation, departure, the halfway point, finish, and some time afterwards.

This short guide is built along these five moments for reflection. By reading this manual you have entered preparation. Your journey has already started ... I hope you will open the shutters to your inner world in the beautiful landscape around Nijmegen. I hope that you will experience what moves you. Whatever luggage you pack, most of it is *"in your heart and mind"* (Frouke Arns).

I wish you a fruitful journey!

Damiaan Messing

pioneer - Walk of Wisdom

With gratitude for all who contributed to our pilgrimage.

In particular: Manja Bente.

Five natural moments for reflection



1 preparation

2 departure

3 halfway point

4 finish

5 sometime afterwards



**“What if every path
you choose is the
right one?”**

Manja Bente

Two friends decided to walk the Walk of Wisdom together after one of them was declared free of cancer. They wanted to celebrate the fact that they could still do this together. A man walked with his mother in memory of his late wife. Somewhere along the route, they scattered her ashes.

A pilgrim divided the route over ten days to return exactly on her sixtieth birthday (“the age of a philosopher”). Every day she invited someone important in her life to join her. Those who could not walk, joined at a stop for lunch or supper.

**“It is nonsense
that time is money.
Time is not money.
Time is life”**

(Robert Peters, pilgrim 3159)

A wild camper left his phone and camera at home to keep the experience as pure as possible. Another pilgrim took pictures along the whole way of shapes that moved him; he was looking for new shapes for his own life.

A pilgrim wanted to get out of her ‘doing’ and ‘performance’ modes. Encouraged by a pilgrim coach, she regularly sat on a bench during the trip to experience what was there. She walked at Christmas. At a special bench, through which a tree grew, she looked up and saw a straw angel suspended from a branch. “The moment felt blessed!”

“My feelings at the halfway point are a ‘silent’ moment, somewhere between the way there and the way back, as the turning point of a pendulum, where the weight hangs still. You can celebrate that you’ve come this far, and be a little sad because you’re already going home. Or are you happy with that?”

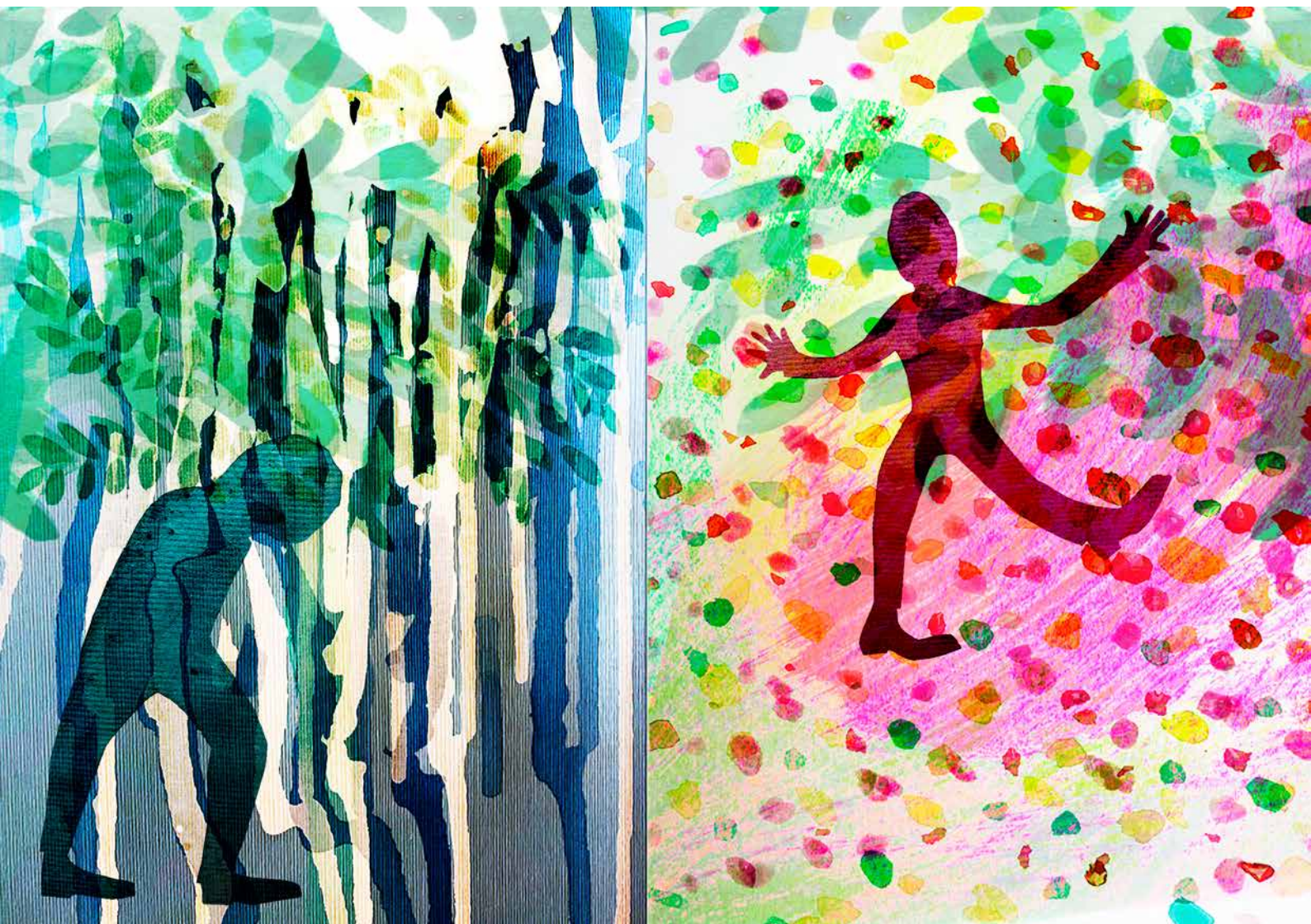
Lidia van Engeland (pilgrim coach)

**“I am walking here
with a friend (66). He
is severely demented,
but he walks like no
other!”**

(From: logbook Chapel of Mary)

Two friends walked the Walk of Wisdom in stages to come to terms with the deaths of their partners, who coincidentally were buried side by side in the cemetery. At each stage they picked one another up from home. There, with a cup of coffee, they pinned our symbol Pilgrim on each other’s jacket and tied the pilgrim’s lace around their wrist. They then walked to the cemetery nearby to light a candle on the graves and catch the bus: “we were always four on this pilgrimage”.

A pilgrim asked her friends and family to share a thought on a piece of paper and put it into an envelope. Before she started, she sat down in a quiet place in the St Stephen’s Church to open the envelopes and read.



1 preparation

You are about to walk the Walk of Wisdom around Nijmegen. But why? And how are you going to walk it?

The myriad of motives of pilgrims to walk this pilgrimage often fills me with wonder. One pilgrim wants time for himself, the other “quality time” with a friend or family member.

Some pilgrims walk to mourn, others to celebrate life. Pilgrims walk in preparation for retirement, to reflect on a new job or just to simplify a hectic life and be surrounded by nature.

Whether you walk alone or together, go for good conversation or simple silence: no choice is better than another - only less or more tailored to your needs as a pilgrim.



A few choices

Do you walk alone or with others?

Do you cover the whole pilgrimage in one week or in stages?

Do you plan how many kilometers you make every day or do you 'walk and see'?

Do you book overnight stays before departure or on the day itself?

Are you keeping in touch with "home" and if so: how?

My advice: walk the route continuously in about one week. This way, you will get into a rhythm and be able to leave your everyday routine behind more easily.

I myself prefer to book overnight stays in advance. This gives me peace of mind while walking. Others go without planning and start looking for a place to stay at lunchtime - or even later. An exercise in trust and surrender.

Once I tried this more adventurous approach. On the second day, I suddenly felt like walking all through the night. Under a clear and starry sky I stepped through abandoned winter landscapes until deep in the next morning, accompanied by the occasional rustle of

some animal and the calm step of my shoes. It was a magical experience.

Whatever approach you choose: the Dutch Walk of Wisdom eddies around a large city and public transport is available almost everywhere. If you can't get an overnight stay somewhere, you'll find one further up or in Nijmegen. Travel there by bus. Alternatively: kindly ask your host family or B&B if they are willing to collect you.

Suggestions in preparations

Conversation or letter

Before leaving, write down or speak with someone about why you are walking this pilgrimage. It is quite possible to surprise yourself by doing this. Need help? Our website lists coaches who have walked the pilgrimage themselves and are offering a dialogue before and after your trip.

Luggage

Your luggage is more than just clean clothes and toiletries. Find something that symbolizes that "more" and take it with you. A photo or card easily fits into the flap of your route guide, or hang something on your pilgrim's lace, bag, or guide ring binder. Is it too big? Have it ready at home and see how it affects you when you return.



Rapiarium

A *rapiarium* is a notebook where clergymen wrote down sentences that moved them. By continuous re-reading, those sentences became part of their inner world.

I once did this myself with reports from our pilgrims, with a surprising outcome. I had resolved to tie a string on the gate of hospice Bethlehem at the beginning of our route - in memory of my dear father. Once at the gate, I had forgotten the string. I was dismayed. "There is something on the route for you," I recalled from the reports, together with the irritating "The universe takes care of the details." Suddenly I saw a big feather near the gate. I decided to pick it up and put it in the flap of my route guide. In the days that followed, I found the feather again and again whenever I opened the guide. My father felt close to me the whole trip.

Contact with home

Discuss how to keep in touch with "home" and friends or family. Are you going to send a message everyday or no messages at all? Many smartphones have a "do not disturb" where one or more contacts can call and the rest is blocked. Those who fear disappearing into a screen in the evening can take an old mobile phone with a prepaid SIM card.



2 departure

You won't be the first pilgrim to head for the route coming straight out of the train or car, with a mind full of thoughts. That whirlpool of thoughts will calm down when your feet find the rhythm of the road.

Yet, it makes a difference if you take your first steps consciously, it is a natural moment for reflection. For the coming days you will leave behind your role patterns of work and relationships, to become a pilgrim. In Latin: peregrinus, 'a stranger'.

If you want, you can light a candle in the quiet chapel at our starting point, the Stevenskerk (St Stephen's Church). You can register your start date on the participants list via the administrator. We have kept track of this log from the very first pilgrim onwards.

Some pilgrims are waved out by loved ones at the starting point. A warm start to your journey. It is also nice to just sit down somewhere for a moment before leaving. If you come to Nijmegen the evening before departure, you can go out fresh and open in the morning. Why rush?

Goodbye ceremonies

The Walk of Wisdom Foundation organizes goodbye ceremonies for pilgrims twice a month. Every first Saturday at sunrise, listening to a reflection. Every third Saturday with music and an opportunity to express an intention for your journey. The ceremonies are free to attend and are independent of any religion.

“We were five women looking for a seat / To eat our sandwiches quietly / we found a place in your kitchen / five kitchen chairs to sit on / all strangers and yet feeling familiar [...]”

One of our pilgrims was physically unable to walk more than 5 kilometers per day. She put her bike in the car and parked it at the end of each day's stage. After walking each stage, she cycled back to that day's starting point. Thus, she walked the entire route in a year.

A pilgrim booked the same B&B in Nijmegen for the whole week. He traveled back to the B&B by public transport after each day. There he had prepared a drawing pad on the table to process his impressions after a good meal. This way, he did not have to carry much luggage and every day had a feeling of coming home again.

A pilgrim booked a few days in a quiet B&B after her journey, to take it slow and contemplate. There are several peaceful guest houses in Nijmegen, or in the rewilded Ooijpolder nearby if you prefer such.

A detail for your journey

Modern pilgrims usually walk for personal reasons. The story behind a pilgrimage is often no more than a backstory. The story of the Walk of Wisdom is the connection between yourself and the big picture of life on the planet. Your personal choices influence the big picture and vice versa. A detail for your pilgrimage?

“Walk of Wisdom ♥ I walk it with my dearest mother. Quiet, togetherness, just enjoying life: however it comes, however it goes further. I am always strong with her by my side. Love,”
(From: logbook Chapel of Mary)

3 halfway point

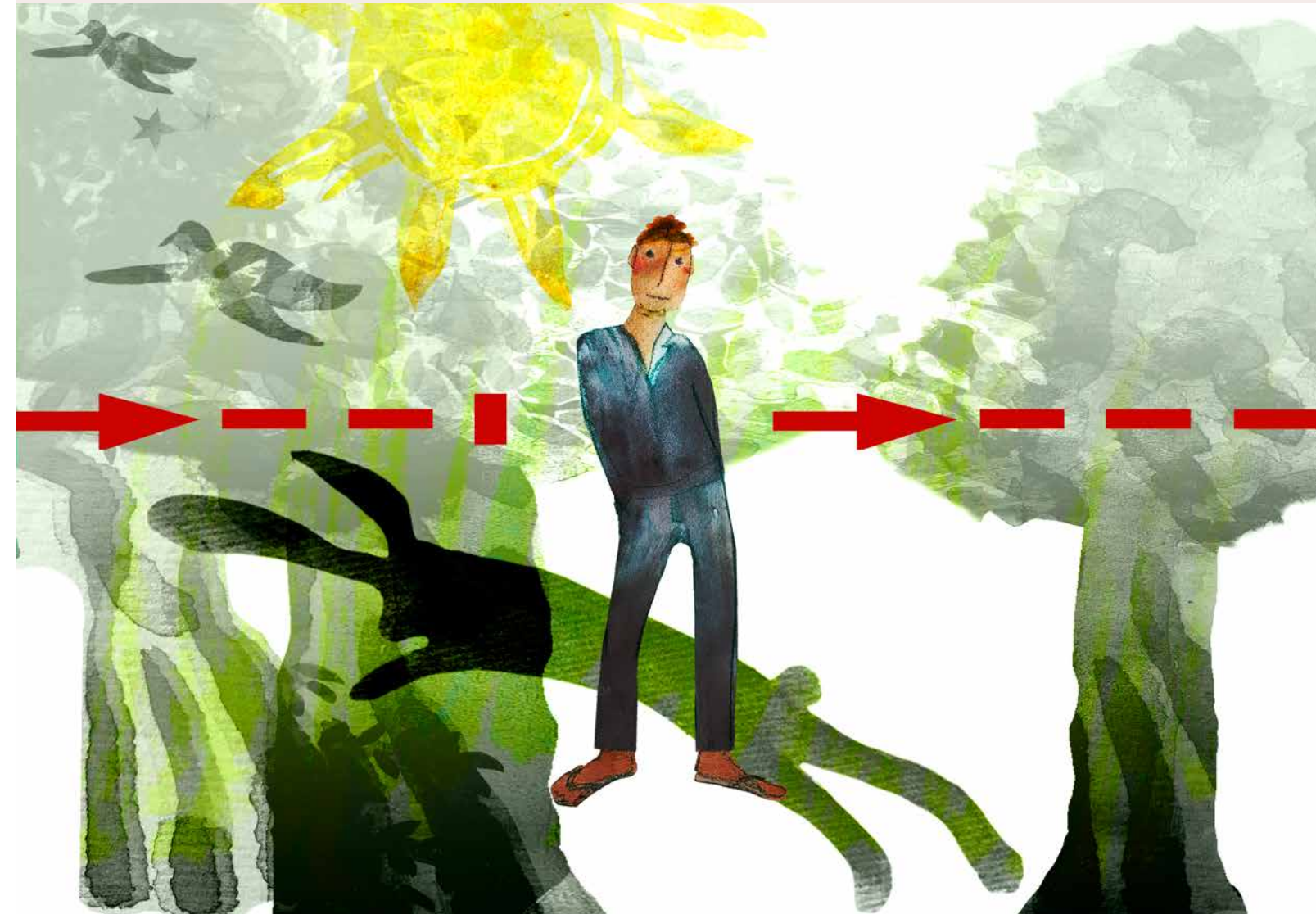
You have walked for a few days now and are further away from your normal life. A good time to reflect on your life or routines, and rethink why you left at all.

Little chapel

Halfway along the route is a modern chapel dedicated to Mary. It was built by two parents who lost a child to cancer. Next to the book of prayers to Mary is a log of the Walk of Wisdom. Many pilgrims write something personal here they want to share. You can also light a candle. The proceeds from the sale go to cancer research.

Day off

Have you ever thought about including a day of rest in your schedule? Not because you need this physically (a good reason too), but just to rest. As Sundays used to be. To do nothing for a moment. Lounge in the sun, write or maybe read something. A day of stillness between days of walking in an unknown space. It can be rewarding.



4 finish

There you are: the end! You will see the endpoint, the Stevenskerk (St Stephen's Church) from far away. Along the route you will pass by a labyrinth, a symbol of the way in, the longest journey you can ever make.

All in all, you returned where you started, 136 kilometers earlier: What will you take home?

There are pilgrims who plan an overnight stay for this last day. To contemplate and let the feeling of being a pilgrim linger on for a while. Others prefer to go home the same day.

Whatever you do, that moment of satisfied fatigue at the finish is an entrance to the "ancient garden of images" of the head and heart that the poet Frouke Arns writes about. Explore for a while this transitional time: you have returned but are not yet at home. You are still free from the daily routines and patterns of your everyday life, still full of journey impressions.

Take a seat in the church or on a terrace and see what comes to mind.



5 reflection afterwards

Before you know, “normal” life has started again. Do you still remember the rhythm of your feet? The bird you heard in the morning? The light shining through the trees, or the words that bubbled up after hours of walking?

You don’t need to be a poet to be struck by days of hiking surrounded by beautiful nature. Reimagining the impressions after a while is meaningful in itself. It is a natural moment for reflection: in what sense was this tour for you a pilgrimage, a Walk of Wisdom?

If you want to contribute to our young pilgrim tradition: write and send in a story or report of your experiences to share with other pilgrims. Or, feel free to keep it to yourself.

See the website www.walkofwisdom.org: stories of pilgrims.



Our species name
is 'homo sapiens:
wise humans'.

How wise are we? We are smart enough to rule the planet. But we disrupt the climate we are living in, destroy the habitats of millions of other species and forsake many of our kin. Our planetary rule therefore looks unsustainable and lacks grace.

'Homo sapiens - wise humans'. To me, the name is more of an aspiration than a honorary title. A murmured prayer of our Walk of Wisdom symbol *Pilgrim*.

A beckoning destination for
a collective pilgrimage.

Come, walk with us.



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Take a selfie before setting out, then leave
your mobile to its own devices. Now only you

have access to yourself. You must charge your own battery.
Your footsteps fall in with those who've gone before and yet

this journey feels as if new. Travel light-footed. A map your guide
on which the outline of a pigeon in full flight points out the way.

Be easy to spot from your lack of luggage, most of which is
in your head and heart, that ancient garden of images. Add birds

that sit on wires like a music score. Decipher the song
especially composed for you. Thread the rings on your shoestring.

Reach after days across the open fields your destination.
The horizon slowly releases you from waving countryside.

Take another selfie when you return. Look for differences.
You have come this far.

Frouke Arns





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