

# Living the Sacred Landscape

Writing Retreat in Ireland

with Carolyn Brigit Flynn

July 4 – July 14, 2007



*Entrance stone, Newgrange*

It is said that Ireland is the land of saints and scholars, yet it is also a land of stones and rivers, fields and cliffs, pubs and storytellers, poetry and music—a place of endless summer light and blessing rains. Eire, as she is known by her ancient name, is a sacred landscape conceived in Irish myth as a woman, who carries thousands of years of human devotion to the spirits of the earth.

During this ten-day writing retreat and tour we will enter the soul of this ancient landscape. We will visit her wild, rugged beauty, meet her people, and encounter her poetry, music and storytelling. As a daily rhythm, we will spend most mornings within the deep well of writing, dreamtelling and sacred story, with afternoons out among the stones, land, rivers, towns and people of Ireland. There will be full retreat/writing days spent quietly with the writer within and with the land. There will also be several full days visiting local towns and pubs, exploring ancient sites, mythic rivers, old Celtic monasteries, and sacred wells devoted to Brigit, Ireland's great mother goddess.



*Hill of Tara*

We will tour a wide variety of places, with a focus on Ireland's ancient passage mounds. These chambers of initiation, light and re-birth were ritually placed upon the Irish landscape 5,000 years ago. To enter these mounds is to walk into the original womb. Being inside makes it possible to enter another kind of human psyche—one that lived in deep and ongoing relationship with our earth as living mother.

In these times of astonishing change, hope, despair, beauty and violence, visiting this sacred landscape is to journey home. Whether or not you are of Irish descent, the Irish stones hold messages from the ancients, who encoded the mysteries of our earth in relation to the sun, moon, and cosmos.

We will use writing, along with meditation, art, story, dreams and prayer, to allow our own personal relationship with the land, the stones, the people and the rivers to unfold. Writers of all levels of experience are welcome.



*The River Boyne*

**Location:** Our writing retreat and tour will take place in two beautiful parts of Ireland: the rich and verdant Boyne Valley north of Dublin, and beautiful County Sligo in the west. During the first five days in the Boyne Valley, we will be among the highest concentration of ancient megalithic art and passage mounds anywhere in the world. We will stay within walking distance of the famous mounds of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, living in the beautiful valley and open fields which attracted Ireland's indigenous people 5,000 years ago. We will spend sacred time with the soul of this valley, the River Boyne, named for Boann, the White Cow Goddess.

The second half of the retreat will be spent in County Sligo in the west of Ireland. We will stay in a small village overlooking the lakes of Lough Gara and visit the megalithic passage mounds at Carrowkeel, Carrowmore and Deerpark, built five hundred years earlier than Newgrange. These ancient landscapes are beautiful, quiet, soulful places for deep connection, meditation and prayer among the carved stones, and we will have uninterrupted days to allow for individual writing, prayer and silence. We will explore the lively town of Sligo, visiting a local artist, discovering shops and pubs. We will also visit the famous River Shannon, which snakes her way from the north of Ireland to the southwest, named for the Celtic Goddess Sinnan.

**Retreat and Tour:** All lodging, ground transportation, guides, entrances to sites, writing facilitation and meals are included (with the exception of a few lunches and dinners on your own). Vegetarian meal options will be available. Our bed & breakfast in the Boyne Valley will be The Glebe House, in the backyard of the mysterious, quiet and secluded ancient mound at Dowth ([www.knowth.com/glebehouse.htm](http://www.knowth.com/glebehouse.htm)). Bicycles will be available for rental. In Sligo we will stay at Lough Gara Lodge ([www.loughgaralodge.com](http://www.loughgaralodge.com)), in the small village of Monasteraden, overlooking a beautiful lake, with lovely grounds and hiking nearby. Substantial and delicious Irish breakfasts will be served at our B&B's. Lunches will be in local pubs or packed for day trips. Dinners will be at excellent local restaurants. In both areas we will have terrific local guides. We will travel in mini-vans or coaches provided by professionals.

**Cost and Registration:** Cost is \$2640. Airfare arrangements and expense are on your own. Please reserve your place as soon as possible, no later than February 28, 2007, with a \$500 deposit (\$200 of this deposit is nonrefundable). Payments can be made in two ways: 1) full balance of \$2140 due by March 15, 2007; or 2) two payments of \$1070, due March 15 and May 12. Space is limited to ten participants.

**Contact:** To request a registration form, or for more information, please contact Carolyn Brigit Flynn at (831) 476-7653 or at [carolynflynn@cruzio.com](mailto:carolynflynn@cruzio.com). Good websites to visit: Official Newgrange site with many terrific links: [www.knowth.com](http://www.knowth.com); John Willmott, our Sligo guide: [www.celticways.com](http://www.celticways.com); Wonderful website with terrific images by Martin Byrne: [www.carrowkeel.com](http://www.carrowkeel.com).



*Winter Solstice sun illuminates Newgrange*