

Dale Walsh

In 2017, my wife, Staci, said she wanted to hike the ice age trail, I thought well, we already have hiked some of the ice age trail. How far does it really go? Are they still developing it? I hadn't heard it was done.

Then she made it clear. She wanted to hike the complete ice age trail, because there are parts of it called connector routes on roads. I thought well that's gonna take a long time. Is that possible? Can we do that? She told me where it started and where it ended. I like maps, so I looked into that more, and it became more interesting to me.

We decided that we should start on the West side of the State at the Western terminus. We planned a trip to St Croix Falls. Then realized how much driving it would take to get it done. Also, never thought about actually doubling the mileage doing out and back hikes. I thought it would be better marked. Actually got off course a little bit. Staci said there was an app. everyone talked about called mammoth tracks that works using GPS on your phone. Again, I like maps, so I got the app. Made it much easier. Then we started making many trips West on highway 29 to start covering sections in the Western part of the State. It was very interesting getting to know. The geology of the state and seeing so many small towns. Finding places to camp or stay was challenging sometimes. When we learned about shuttle rides from trail volunteers it made things much easier, then. Staci had the idea of carrying a scooter on the back of our vehicle and leaving it at our destination for the day. Then we started covering a lot more ground. We attempted at least 8 miles a day, did 12 miles one day starting late on the hilly land around Straight lake etc...that was too much. First year we didn't cover too many miles. Then the next year With the scooter for shuttling, we really started covering a lot of ground Finished Polk County, went to Barron and quite a ways in to Rusk county. We heard a lot of stories about how bad the grassy Lake section was. And yet it was really muddy. But we survived it, wouldn't have been nearly as bad if it wasn't for recent logging tearing up the soil. The Following Spring we started near Weyerhaeuser, finished Rusk County, through the Chippewa morain area.

Then, all the way through the national forest in Taylor County. Lincoln County was very challenging with the long shuttle around the New Wood area. Trying to find roads that went east-west through it unsuccessfully. Several stream fords in that area. I didn't like the cold water.

We crossed the Wisconsin river. And Almost made it to highway 51 in 2019 lots of miles covered.

When we started in the Spring of 2020 it was weird with COVID. Not many people on the road, but we had a lot of time to hike. We hiked almost every weekend 1 day. Lots of ticks in Langlade county in the spring, then worked Our way through the hilly parts of Langlade county before it got too hot in the summer. Went through Marathon county and into Portage and Waupaca counties. Starting 2021, we were in southern Portage County and hiked on land that was once owned by my great, great Uncle. Then down into Waushara county. I was surprised at how many seemingly remote areas there were in waushara county. That was one of things I liked about the hike. Going to places I normally wouldn't think of. Next was Marquette County, around Montello lots of nice hardwoods in that area. Really enjoyed the history around Portage. Took a side trip up the portage canal where the Wisconsin river nearly meets the Fox River. At the end of that season we crossed the Wisconsin river on the Merrimac ferry and found some

nice places to stay near Wisconsin dells at the end of the season. In 2022 We really started concentrating on getting the trail completed with other things going on in our lives.

We went from Lodi through the Madison area, Albany, during the summer. Then made it to Janesville on Labor Day weekend.

Much nicer land northeast of Janesville getting into southern Kettle Moraine. Up through the interesting suburban areas west of Milwaukee and covered nearly all of the Southern kettle moraine unit that fall.. we even did some weekends the winter of 2023 working up through Fond Du Lac and Sheboygan Counties. Spring of 2023, we started near Elkhart Lake, up through Manitowoc County, where we are from originally. Saw familiar areas through Manitowoc, Point beach, Two Rivers, up through the farm land in Kewaunee county, and into Door County. We were planning on hiking our typical 8 or 10 miles the last Sunday that we were out, and Staci thought we should make an attempt of just finishing the complete trail that day. So our last day was the longest of the whole hike at 14 miles. Staci was done at this point. I needed to complete a little section out near Centuria, that I didn't do because I was waiting for a shuttle ride while Staci continued on. We were in the Western part of the State the third week of June, so I finally got it done then. Also, did not want to forget to include that our little terrier mix dog, Annie, completed over 800 miles of the trail with us.