

Essay on my IAT journey – Dan Knickmeier

The idea to hike the trail came out of COVID when a trip was postponed and the IAT emerged from one of our hiking buddies. Never actually hiking the trail prior (except for not knowing I was on the trail when hiking in Devils Lake State Park) I thought who would want to hike meadows and fields? This shows my lack of knowledge about the trail. It wasn't very long, maybe after five different days on trail, that I began to realize that the IAT is much more than I thought. Certainly the guidebook gave much insight, but actually hiking the beautiful trails brought me into reality.

The high points were not limited to the beauty of segments like Mondeaux Esker, or Easter Lodi Marsh in the fall and Grandfather Falls. Or getting lost briefly—at night—at the end of Camp 27. Grassy lake was a high point for the way we fought through the most intense mosquitos and biting flies we experienced on the trail.

Of course, the small towns of Wisconsin turned into a magical highlight for me. We learned much, and shared our story with many in these small towns including business owners. A real treat!

Our group started the trail thinking it would be two, maybe three seasons of hiking each year. It turned out to be universally loved by our group, and myself, to hike in the winter with fewer insects and the beauty of winter is underappreciated by me. The end was a mix of emotions with successfully completing the trail, but also the loss of the planning and executing of shuttling cars to our various spots. It's an experience that ranks up there on the top 10 list of all time favorite trips.

THANK YOU IATA, donors, and landowners who allow us to traipse around Wisconsin!