

Glimpses of my experience hiking the Ice Age Trail:

Tentatively crossing a beaver dam while watching three tundra swans glide by.

Hiking as countless sun-drenched yellow leaves drift down on us. It's Autumn!

Staring, transfixed, at the reflection of trees circling a kettle lake.

Walking through rural Wisconsin towns lined with quirky shops and billboards promoting civic pride.

The four of us chatting about life, aging, families, the next yellow blaze, the sound of our hiking poles hitting the ground.

Trudging along icy connecting routes for hours on end. When will we finally reach the car? It's Winter!

Shocked by the number of aggressive political signs in front of idyllic, old farmsteads.  
Encouraged by the kindness of men in pickup trucks stopping to ask if we need water. It's Summer!

Confronting the challenges posed by forging fast rushing streams; muddy, slick trails; ticks, biting flies, mosquitoes; aching backs.

Rain, snow, sun, clouds, wind. And again.

Falling on a sharp rock along a Devil's Lake trail followed by a hasty, bloody retreat to the car.

Turning 80 and hiking 7 miles that day.

Encountering the unexpected wooden mermaid along the trail, a huge sculpture of wagon wheels and deer skulls, small rocks with painted "Be Here Now" messages.

And the moments when I WAS here, now—open, silent, aware. And so many moments lost in discursive thoughts, plans, worries.

Delighted by the carpets of spring ephemerals (trillium, jacob's ladder, rue anemone), delicate, light-green Pennsylvania sedge, grasses festooned with spider webs. It's Spring!

Acquiring a rudimentary understanding of the glacier's impact on the land. My trail name was "Eske" and I walked on many of them.

A recognition and acceptance of the strengths and weaknesses of each of us.

The Ice Age Trail:

A quilt of memories of a unique natural and human landscape stitched together by the growing love and friendship I shared with my fellow hikers, The Erratics: Liz (Kame), Fiona (Swale) and Kate (Drumlin)

*Susanne Dane*  
*(Eske)*