

May 2023

Ice Age Trail - A Hike Across Wisconsin

This adventure started like so many others, over a cold beer and some trash talking amongst four friends (or the “4 Amigos”) about what we hoped to accomplish in the coming year. We have been friends for almost 50 years and are always looking for a new challenge, so in April 2015 we made a pact to hike the Ice Age Trail together. Our spirits and enthusiasm were high and we started out strong by hiking major portions of the southern segments of the Ice Age Trail which were closest to where we live. But then, as they say, life got in the way. Between job responsibilities, kids, grand kids, family commitments, injuries and one surgery we lost focus. Our miles dropped to almost zero over the course of a year. Then we retired and the COVID pandemic hit. We didn’t exactly know what to do at first ... was it safe to go hiking with other people? Then came the Mammoth Trail Challenge in October 2020 and we were able to refocus our attention on the IAT.

As of May 20, 2023 we finished by hiking the last of the 1,121 miles into Cornell and stopped at Moon Ridge Brewery. We are now starting to plan our victory celebration. We envision a gathering of our family & friends including all of our “guest hikers” who have hiked portions of the trail with us.

Hiking Highlights: There are so many but here are a few of our favorites ...

- Baraboo / Devils Lake – the views are the best in southern Wisconsin
- Whitewater / West Bend – Kettle Moraine areas, hard to beat piney forests paths
- John Muir – Sentimental attachment, it is near our hometowns
- Lake Michigan - Hike on the lakeshore, soooo Wisconsin!
- St Croix Falls – The western terminus has beautiful views, a great place to start/finish
- Taylor County – Mondeaux Esker segment, this is truly one of THE great hikes
- Lublin – The American Legion chicken feed, cold beer & great people on Memorial Day, nothing better

In summary, it is hard to describe how much we enjoyed the 1200 mile hike across the great state of Wisconsin. This has to be one of the greatest hiking experiences in the world and it is right here in our own home state. The diverse and beautiful landscape (even with ticks and mosquitos), the fall colors, the changing and unpredictable weather, the local pubs and supper clubs, Wisconsin’s welcoming culture and especially all the people we met and interacted with across the state are all highlights of our hikes. As Wisconsin natives, hiking the IAT has given us the best, close up views of Wisconsin we could ever experience.

We would like to extend our special thanks to all the trail angels, trail workers, patrons and volunteers who make the IAT such a spectacular experience. Thank you for everything you do!

We highly recommend hiking the Wisconsin Ice Age Trail. It’s one of life’s great experiences.

Kathy Schwantes, Sylvia Schlieckau, Michael (Benny) Benesh, Mike Schwantes (4 Amigos)