

I started as an ultra runner and finished as a thousand miler.

The adventure began out of a need to maintain my sanity after a cancer diagnosis. After the diagnosis I lost so much of my endurance for running that I became interested in hiking the trails that I use to run. My heart lies with the Greenbush area and Parnell. I know those trails like the back of my hand. So I got the idea to hike these areas. Curiosity led to exploring other areas of the trail. Soon I found out about the Trail Angel shuttle system. I admit I took full advantage of this every chance I got. I eventually added a 4 legged sidekick to my adventure and we were off to the races.

The 2 of us spent many hours and miles together traveling to a trailhead and then hiking. I have a slightly obsessive personality and I was on a course to hike this trail. Every chance we got we were headed out. We hiked a lot together, but when the weather turned cold she stayed home and my hikes got shorter because I couldn't leave her home alone for an entire day.

After finding numerous Facebook groups I began hiking with other people to share the miles and shuttles. Many miles created many opportunities to share experiences with like minded people. I found a new community with these people. We shared a lot of laugh's together.

Eventually I was running out of day trips and the logistics were getting harder to figure out. I few over night stays and Uber were implemented into the plans.

I was able to share a long weekend with some ladies and the miles flew by. They were both looking to finish the trail before the end of the year and put that bug in my brain. Not a good thing! In sept I had no plans on when I would finish the trail. But that weekend I decided I wanted to be finished by the conference in April 2024. I am determined. That was the end of September and I hadn't even gotten to 700 miles. The thing I had going for me was a lot of vacation time to use.

Then things really got tough. Logistics became the obstacle. To my surprise I was lucky enough to find the best trail angels in Tami and Corey. I got to spend 8 days with them taking advantage of their kindness and home not to mention shuttling me numerous days. To top it off Tami is a crazy good cook and fed me wonderful meals to fuel me to tackle the next days hike. The best text from her, in the middle of a day of hiking, "do you like pecan or apple pie?" Amazing! One of the highlights for sure.

Eventually I got out of their jurisdiction and was able to stay with a fellow runner. She was so nice to allow me to crash on her couch more days than I want to admit. And she took care of my sidekick while I was hiking those long days. We even got in some miles together and she was able to check off some segments of her own. While I stayed with her I was treated to the shuttle service of Buzz, yes, Buzz. What a treasure to the trail he is. He had so many stories to share and I soaked it all in.

The mild temps and weather of the fall and beginning of winter gave me hope that I could log a ton of miles in before the snow flew and got too deep to pass in the northern segments. As it ended up north, on Dec 23 I managed to get all the segments done ending with Averill-Kelly with my sidekick, and almost no snow the entire time! I was shocked that the stars aligned and I finished those miles. I really thought I'd have to go back in the spring after the snow melted.

With those miles completed it was off to finish miles by Tisch Mills and Point Beach. At this point being so close to the end of the year and still more vacation time I was now determined to finish before the end of the year. A bike shuttle for myself on Christmas Eve and some rain I felt the end in sight. A few days after Christmas I had arranged a shuttle for Point Beach and the CR. Waking up that morning to complete day of rain in the forecast I decided to go for it. While I was contemplating calling it in and not going out in the rain I'm glad I didn't. My shuttle would not have been able to help any other day. So with a plastic bag for a skirt and bags over my gloves I hiked the 14+ miles in the cold rain. Surprisingly the beach wasn't as harsh as I was expecting with the weather. That segment gave me a taste of appreciation for all the great weather I had had the month of Dec. I wasn't complaining.

With the beach being done it left the finally segment of Sturgeon Bay and the terminus for the final miles. I invited a few people to hike the day with me. I wanted to share it with the friends I spent so many miles with over the last 18 months. Not everyone was able to make it, but Nicole, Chris, and my daughter were there. The day was incredibly warm for the end of Dec. The miles flew by as we remembered all our hikes together. Nicole had finished the trail just a few weeks earlier and Chris hit the halfway point earlier in the month. My daughter understood the draw of the trail and camaraderie of those that set out on this adventure. I think she has the bug.

Finishing at the terminus and an uncharacteristically beautiful December day with family and friends was more than I could have asked for. This trail has become a part of me. In my heart and soul. I still think about it every day. It's been a few weeks since finishing and it's not been easy. I want to be on the trail hiking. I realized why there are those that have hiked this trail more than once. It draws you in and becomes a part of you. The trail is like a friend, a

confidant. It gives you so much. It's shows you parts of yourself you didn't know were there. The people I have met and places I have seen I couldn't be more impressed by and grateful for.

The weather turned sour the day after I finished. Coincidence? I don't think so. Luck? Nope. Just the way it was meant to be.

Franara Radtke