

I may have taken every step to complete the IAT, my first National Scenic Trail, but it was anything but a solo journey. Many thanks to my wife Liz who started the journey with me, and accompanied me on 800 miles of the journey. Many of those miles were out and backs. Some of them were self-bike shuttles and of many of them were with others in this group. She also was supportive of me continuing on to complete the trail without her. I probably should mention, it never crossed my mind to bike shuttle until I saw it brought up on this page. Everyone here has been helpful!

There are so many who supported my journey. There's Laura Hinesh, who is the first person from the Thousand Miler WanneBe's that I met and hiked with. She answered my call to hike the entire 27 mile Manitowoc CR in one day. I didn't know you could cut short CR's until Laura brought that to my attention. I still wanted to do the 27 as prescribed and Laura said "Ok, let's do it then". Of course, after 20 some miles I was like, "so, how can we shorten this!!?" It was and still is my biggest miles in a single day at 26.

There's Christopher White, who was the second person I met. We collaborated on the Rockville 31 mile CR. We knocked it out in 2 days as required to qualify for the Rockville County Badge (not taking any shortcuts).

For a while, we returned to out and backs until one day I saw on the WanneBe page a group called Get Off The Couch (Paul Wendelberger, Matt Aschenbrener, Lee Augustine) was hiking the same segment Liz and I were going to do anyways; The Valley View Segment. We joined GOTC for many more hikes as they sequentially marched westward. And when GOTC started going a different direction, we ended up meeting Shelley Botchek and Mike Kliner. Many thanks for the miles together, and especially for pulling my car out a snow filled ditch in Lodi.

It was when we got to Devil's Lake Western Bluff when we first met and hiked with Sanjay. We hiked many miles with Sanjay Shoney, and he helped get us through most of the Eastern Bifurcation. It proved tough to keep up with Sanjay, but we did meet up and do a few other northern segment hikes together.

There are so many other selfless, amazing, inspiring and helpful people I met and shared hikes and conversation with along the way. Serena Stipek, Bruce Davis & Jenifer Davis, Jeff Frazer, Virginia Welle, Kathy Prell Purpus, Michael Hourigan, Erin Marie, Emily Beasley and others. There were other people I've never met but have only followed on this page that were inspirational like Yolonda. There also are others like Joe Jopek the Chapter Coordinator for Langlade. Buzz Meyer of the High Point Chapter. Both of whom I had the pleasure of meeting. Thank you to Trail Angel Sean Emmerich for the shuttles.

I'm also very thankful for Laura Schneider. I attempted Kettlebowl with over 2 feet of snow with her in February this year on Cross Country Skis, and I was stubborn and determined to finish the segment. Laura got me to realize that I would be spending the night in the forest if I didn't turn back after 3 miles. I appreciated that she came back in the spring and helped me complete the segment on the second try.

Then there's Matt Aschenbrener who organized many of the hikes in the north/west segments which really helped propel me to the finish this year.

And again, I can't thank Laura Hinesh enough who was always willing to do as many miles as I wanted in day after the organized hike was completed to help me close out gaps. And there's Sarah Driscoll, who joined in my crazy July 4th weekend to knock out 45 miles over three days; my biggest three day mileage.

And of course, special thanks to all who joined on my final hike on becoming a Thousand Miler; Matt, Lee, Kathy, and two of my friends from high school Larry and Sue.

I hope to join all of you again on future hikes. I look forward to meeting and helping others complete their IAT journey.

- David Gerst