

Faith, Perseverance, Gratitude

Hiking the Ice Age Trail

My journey starts without a clue. I'm not an outdoors kind of person. I don't enjoy bugs, sweating, the cold, wet, aches, pains etc. I have no idea when it comes to North, South, East or West. Give me a left or right and I can manage. Why would I choose to take on this challenge? A friend said she was going to do it and I jumped in and offered to go with her. All my gratitude to her for this amazing journey. I think all the adjectives, over time, have been used to describe the feelings and lessons a person learns along the way when taking on this challenge but everyone's experience is different. I learned that the beauty of Wisconsin is not just in my backyard. That if you don't quit you can do it. There is more than one way to accomplish something. That I don't always work well with others. That I can find my way if I have too! That you're never truly lost. That I couldn't have done it without my amazing family and friends. Some of these are lessons I should have already known at this point in my life, but I needed a reminder.

We thought hiking the connecting routes wasn't going to be as exciting and fun because we really enjoyed the peace on the trails. We discovered that they too had a purpose. In the winter months when we didn't want to navigate trails in the snow, we did the connecting routes. You get a whole different experience on the connecting routes. A person doesn't realize what's out there in these little towns, villages, cities. They all tell a different story. We stayed in hotels, and motels along the way. We camped in a tent and our car when we could. Car camping was so much better than the tent. Our hiking plans consisted of both of us driving. Parking our cars at the beginning and end of a section. I planned the hikes, and she brought the food. We enjoyed finding new places to eat in whatever area we landed. We had a few mishaps and found ourselves lost on a couple occasions. Sometimes due to confusion if signage wasn't clear and sometimes just too much chatting and not enough paying attention. On every occasion though we were overjoyed to see the car. We were snowed on, rained on, we hiked in incredible heat and high wind; I loved every minute of it. We saw beautiful sunrises and sunsets. My friend and I hiked several hundred miles of the trail together but were unable to finish it together. My daughter and a dear friend jumped in to hike the rest of it with me. It was so special for me to finish with them.

What I learned from this amazing adventure is that it takes faith to believe you can do it, perseverance to keep going in hard times and gratitude for all the people in my life who believed in me and supported all my crazy ideas.

All my gratitude and admiration to the staff and volunteers that give their time to the trail. Hiking it is the easy part. Making it possible for people to be able to hike across the entire state is hard to imagine unless you hike it and see the planning, work and love that goes into it.

It took almost 5 years for me to finish the trail. Covid certainly changed the world but getting back on the trail, and making memories, helps you remember the joy.