

Thousand-Miler Essay

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It's hard to say exactly when our IAT journey really began. We had hiked a few local sections of the trail over the years but never really gave much thought to the trail in its entirety. Sometime in 2019, our then 6 year old twins, declared they wanted to hike the entire Ice Age Trail.

Knowing how unusual of a request this was for children we decided to roll with it! The fact that we homeschool, and my husband's flexible schedule, allowed us to take on this endeavor. We started fresh on New Years Day 2020, re-hiking any of the sections we had previously hiked. We section hiked, jumping around the trail, choosing our hike based on weather, season, what type of hike we wanted, etc. This allowed us to be "fair weather" hikers and rarely got stuck in undesirable weather. We focused mainly on road in the winter and spring, avoided the trail (and all hiking in general) in the summer due to bugs and heat. Most of our miles were hiked in the fall and we all found it to be the most enjoyable season. We started out hiking up to 10 miles at a time and increased our miles as time went on. Our longest hike was a full marathon, at 26.2 miles! I never thought I would/could walk so far in 1 day, let alone that my 8 year old children could as well. We were always proving what we were capable of, whether it was hiking in the woods until midnight (another of the kids grand ideas), fording an unexpected stream in 30-some degree weather, crossing unsteady beaver dams, or scaring a baby bear up a tree and watching momma bear run to the rescue (Matt experienced this while alone, thankfully!). While it wasn't always easy, and sometimes down right stressful, the IAT will always be a delightful memory for our family. I am glad our kids had this crazy idea and I hope other children and parents will be inspired to do the same.