

How I Came to be a 1000 Miler

It started with Weight Watchers.

In 2015, I weighed 181 pounds, and I was trending upwards. Frankly, I was starting to feel like the Pillsbury Dough Boy, and no diet seemed to help. Finally, Weight Watchers taught me how to eat and move properly, and I dropped over 30 pounds. With fewer pounds to carry on my 5' 9" frame, I felt great, and I wondered if there was something I might try that I hadn't considered before. I had walked some of the loop trails in the South Kettle Moraine, so I knew of the Ice Age Trail, and I recently had seen Martin Sheen walking the Camino de Santiago in the movie "The Way", which made hiking look very appealing. After doing a little more research, I decided to give the Ice Age Trail a try. I ordered a Guide and an Atlas. After going through the Guide and discussing it with my wife, we planned my first hike.

While looking over a map of the trail, I thought it looked like a misshapen U. I decided I would start at the southernmost location in Janesville and work my way north and east to Door County – the shorter "half". Once I completed that portion, I returned to the Janesville area and started working my way west, then north via the east bifurcation and north again until I reached Langlade County. Then I hung a left and continued west until I reached the terminus in St. Croix Falls.

I have journaled all my hikes. They are located at <https://jimshikes.com/>.

What did I learn?

First and foremost, clear communications is most important! Prior to any hike, I would leave Jane a flight plan with a highlighted route and an estimated hike time. I would also clear my plans with the chapter coordinator, especially if he or she was shuttling me. I also let the local sheriff know I would be in the area and give a description of my car. Once on the trail, I would text my wife to let her know where I was and when, so she could follow my progress.

Second, remember the Ice Age rules in the event of getting lost:

Stop.

Look behind you for a yellow blaze.

Don't see one? Then reverse your field and walk back to the last place where you saw a blaze and reorient yourself.

If I did this, I would not have needed to call the Langlade Sheriff for help on Day 76.

Third, volunteers are a resource to be treasured. They are not the hired help. Remember this, and treat them with respect and gratitude.

Fourth, Wisconsin is an incredibly beautiful state when you slow down and look. A veritable feast for the senses. I grew to really appreciate the silences in nature.

Fifth, Wisconsin Nice is a real thing; I saw it often in my travels.

Last, be prepared to be changed. A hiker once told me she was closer to God in the forest than she was in a church. I understand that now.

Jim Anello

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