

Ice Age Trail Alliance Thousand-Miler Application Essay

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Trail completed 7/9/2020-11/4/2023

I began hiking the Ice Age Trail in my community of Hartland as a part of my daily walks in the summer of 2020. By the summer of 2021 I had completed only 24 miles. After traveling the country for 9 months I returned to the trail in the second half of 2022. At the end of 2022 I had completed only 130 miles of the trail. I realized that at this rate, finishing in my lifetime would be a challenge.

In December 2022 I decided I would commit to completing the trail by the end of 2023. To do that I needed increase my average daily mileage by employing a bike to shuttle between my car and trailhead. I had not owned a bicycle since I was in high school, so this was truly going to become an adventure.

Since March of 2023 I have completed over 1000 hiking miles. I have shuttled by car only twice. The first time was when I realized that to complete Camp 27 and Newwood segments I would need to bike over 30 miles (thanks Buzz Meyer!). The second was to avoid a significant uphill battle biking in the rain to complete a Connecting Route between Portage and the Sauk Point segment (thanks, bro Tom!).

My overall totals were 108 days of hiking, 1136.5 trail miles (some miles added due to missed turns and some reduced by taking a straighter path on Connecting Routes), 791.2 bike miles and over 12,000 car miles driving to trailheads, hotels and respective return trips.

My hike was nearly 100% solo aside from about a half mile with Katrina and Mary on a Connecting Route south of Antigo and about four miles with bro Tom and his wife Vicki at Devil's Lake.

The hike has provided stories that I will be able to share for a lifetime. Some of my favorites include the day I was confronted with my first fording opportunity on the Tisch Mills segment in March of 2023 (I scuttled over a fallen tree), the day of my first beaver dam crossing in May of this year (also my longest mileage day due to missed turns on the Bear Lake segment) and my "week from hell" in Taylor County this past June when I learned the importance of hydration.

I also have a long list of curiosities to follow up on that will keep me reading about things from the trail for quite some time. Like the history of logging and mining in the state. And the annual rise and fall of various insects (Buffalo flies, ticks, mosquitos, caterpillars, grasshoppers,...). Mushrooms – so many questions. How about the the physical and mental aspect of hiking on the human body and how to optimize an hour, a day, a week or an entire trail to minimize fatigue? And so much more.

The tools I used to plan, execute and record my hiking, biking and driving include the Ice Age Trail Guidebook, Ice Age Trail Alliance website, Google Maps, AllTrails app (for hiking), Strava

app (for bike) and of course Weather.com. AllTrails and Strava have left me with a ton of data to play with, some of which is summarized at the end of this essay.

I am so grateful to all the trail volunteers for everything they do to make the trail great. Another shout out goes to the private landowners who have given us a small slice of their property to provide some continuity to the trail. Most every human encounter I had on along the trail was outstanding and memorable in some way, whether it was with a fellow hiker, volunteers, landowner, community folks or even just passers-by on the roads.

Onto the next adventure, whatever that may be...

FUN FACTS

| Mileage by Year | | | |
|-----------------|------|-------|--------|
| | Days | Miles | Mi/Day |
| 2020 | 5 | 21 | 4.2 |
| 2021 | 1 | 3 | 3.0 |
| 2022 | 24 | 106 | 4.4 |
| 2023 | 78 | 1007 | 12.9 |
| Total | 108 | 1137 | 10.5 |

| Mileage by Month | | | |
|------------------|------|-------|--------|
| | Days | Miles | Mi/Day |
| January | 2 | 8 | 4.0 |
| February | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| March | 4 | 58 | 14.5 |
| April | 9 | 118 | 13.1 |
| May | 10 | 136 | 13.6 |
| June | 6 | 72 | 12.0 |
| July | 8 | 78 | 9.8 |
| August | 14 | 164 | 11.7 |
| September | 14 | 164 | 11.7 |
| October | 18 | 226 | 12.6 |
| November | 17 | 80 | 4.7 |
| December | 6 | 33 | 5.5 |
| Total | 108 | 1137 | 10.5 |

| Mileage by Day | | | |
|----------------|------|-------|--------|
| | Days | Miles | Mi/Day |
| Sunday | 1 | 11 | 11.0 |
| Monday | 22 | 216 | 9.8 |
| Tuesday | 18 | 213 | 11.8 |
| Wednesday | 22 | 237 | 10.8 |
| Thursday | 23 | 235 | 10.2 |
| Friday | 20 | 205 | 10.3 |
| Saturday | 2 | 20 | 10.0 |
| Total | 108 | 1137 | 10.5 |

| Miles of each Slope/Terrain combo | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| | | Terrain | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | T |
| Slope | 1 | 89 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 97 |
| | 2 | 15 | 74 | 37 | 33 | 5 | 164 |
| | 3 | 0 | 143 | 63 | 50 | 39 | 295 |
| | 4 | 0 | 24 | 64 | 17 | 15 | 120 |
| | 5 | 0 | 5 | 17 | 16 | 0 | 38 |
| | T | 104 | 254 | 181 | 116 | 59 | 714 |
| CR total miles | | 423 | | | | | |

| Average mile time of each Slope/Terrain combo | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | Terrain | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | T |
| Slope | 1 | 17.0 | 17.4 | | | | 17.0 |
| | 2 | 17.9 | 18.3 | 19.3 | 20.3 | 20.4 | 18.9 |
| | 3 | | 18.8 | 19.8 | 23.6 | 23.2 | 20.4 |
| | 4 | | 19.4 | 19.9 | 22.0 | 23.9 | 20.6 |
| | 5 | | 19.3 | 22.3 | 20.7 | | 21.3 |
| | T | 17.1 | 18.7 | 19.9 | 22.0 | 23.1 | |
| CR average time | | 16.8 | | | | | |