

Kathy Hanson
Stone Lake, WI

My Essay:

For me, the IAT was a trail of DISCOVERY.

I discovered that I absolutely love hiking and being immersed in nature. Whether it was the deep woods or farm fields along roadways, there was always something to catch my eye or my ear, and pique my interest. So stimulating!

I discovered a calm and peace that I was craving, but hadn't even realized. Every time I stepped foot on the trail, my body relaxed and my mind cleared. The best kind of therapy!

I discovered I am a stronger person than I thought, both physically and mentally. The trail was very challenging at times and hiking conditions were not always the greatest, but I always persevered and never gave up. Confidence building!

I learned much about the geology of our state and how glaciers shaped the landscape. The Ice Age transformed our Earth immensely and I discovered the scope of these changes is literally mind-boggling to me. Incredibly educational!

The trail enticed us to areas of Wisconsin we had never traveled before, and along the way discovered sights which instilled jaw-dropping feelings of awe. In particular, those expansive views of gently rolling countryside throughout farm country. Wisconsin is even more beautiful than I ever knew!

But mostly I discovered a retirement pastime that my husband and I enjoy doing together, and created memories we will share for the rest of our lives. Priceless!

My Itinerary:

8/14/18-8/23/21

1132.15 total IAT miles hiked (Eastern Bifurcation)

My husband Bob kept a detailed excel spreadsheet (with a separate column for each of us) in chronological order of each segment & CR we hiked, miles completed, shuttle method used (2 vehicles, out & back, bike or scooter shuttle, trail angel, etc.) and any pertinent notes. We also used the IAT wall map and colored in segments as we completed them, each using our own marker color. This gave us a visual of what we had accomplished-to-date and what trail was still remaining. We started out hiking the trail segments that were closer to home and could be accomplished in a day trip. Eventually we utilized hotels for our overnight stays, as the trail segments became further from home. We didn't hike the trail in order from west to east; instead we chose segments based on weather, time of year, or tagged on a hike to a road trip we had planned for other reasons. We would set intermediate goals for ourselves individually, like reaching "400 miles completed" by the end of a given month. Bob did many hikes on his own when I had other plans/commitments, and therefore he completed the entire trail last October of 2020. Specifically, many of the miles that he trekked alone were the connector routes, as he usually saved the trail segments so we could hike them together. Once he finished, I knew I wanted to complete the entire IAT also. Bob supported me these past 10 months and ended up re-hiking many segments (mostly those darn CR's!) until I accomplished my goal.