

Finding Patience

My second journey started off as no journey at all or so I thought. All I did was join other fellow hikers /friends on their saunters. Ever so slowly it crept up on me. Before I knew it **BAM!!** I was in deep at 600 miles. Bit again by that pesky IAT bug. Looking back I still don't know how it happened. Though if you asked my friends they would have given you a totally different answer.

Sept. 8, 2020:

This hike, which was unknown to me at the time, started the ball rolling for this next IAT journey. It was the 14.6 mile CR in Sauk Co. All I knew then was that a friend needed help with it. During this time before knowing, I completed a lot of goals & my life was balanced. I had newspaper interviews for my first journey, Our WI home was sold & we bought another new home in AL. I moved into an apartment in WI. Explored more of WI & AL. Completed the 2020 Mammoth Challenge where I found Monty twice. Even became the Elusive Hiking Faerie for a Halloween Hike. Overcame my fear of walking on a frozen lake when I hiked Storrs Lake. Saw a friend complete her own journey. The beauty of Rhine Ice appeared & made magical landscapes while on a CR. Got to check off the West Bifurcation. Another goal was completed when I visited all WI State Parks. Microspikes & hiking gaiters were added to my gear after a trail fall & 1 huge blister. I even set up a few hikes to help others in need of those miles. It was only for fun. Why else? I sure as heck wasn't going to hike the IAT again, right?

Oct. 2020 Mammoth Challenge:

"You're gonna do it again." Patty & Peggy joked. "Absolutely **NOT!**" I stated. Yeah right! That was never going to happen again. Last time it was so **VERY** wet, mucky, overgrown, and **BUGGY**. Why would I ever put myself through that again? I almost lost my life in a **RAGING** creek!!!

May 21-23, 2021:

I planned & put into action a trip to complete my nemesis Harrison Hills, Parish Hills, & Averill-Kelly Crks Wldns. They turned into pleasant surprises. No longer did I dread them. Hardly any bugs or mud made these segments enjoyable. I even got to forge Prairie River this time around. Hiking with a great group of new & old friends made it all worthwhile. Still I was hiking with no other reason than to be with friends.

June 19-26, 2021:

Hiked 8 wonderful days for a total of 120 glorious miles with more amazing friends. My hiking friends already knew by this point I would start another journey on this incredible trail. Yet, it wasn't until I added up the miles from this trip (600 to be exact) that reality hit me. It was so very possible. At that moment, I committed to this new goal. Though this time it would be at a slower pace.

Finding the time to hike was difficult. A lot more work went into learning to balance family, work, & obligations. COVID had opened the doors for time & flexibility the first time around. During this second saunter, I grew frustrated at times when longer hiking trips couldn't happen. Finally, I truly understood what my hiking buddies had been talking about all along. Patience & waiting are hard lessons I learned well while visiting my husband in AL. The month of July 2021 was a great teacher. When I wasn't unpacking boxes in our new home, I was planning out all the hikes that needed to be done in order to complete the trail. No IAT miles were accumulated for a few weeks. It may have been a great time with my husband, yet it was the hardest part of this journey. My trail wanderlust was kicking into high gear. A feeling that intensified as the days passed. It is a feeling only fellow hikers truly understand.

July 31-Aug. 4, 2021:

There is a first time for everything! As Maya & I were navigating the eastside of Mondeaux Esker we unknowingly disturbed a ground wasp nest while crossing on a log. Let's just say we will forever be known as the "Stinging Duo". It is an experience that I never want to ever repeat.

Aug.13-15, 2021:

Got to hike with a dear friend of mine. What a perfect person to go on an adventure with! She is my inspiration for wanting to complete the IAT in the first place. Inspired by her own passion to someday become known as a 1,000 Miler. I was the more experienced one. She was the newbie. What an **EPIC** adventure we had!!! We definitely didn't break any major mileage records. All that mattered is that we had fun. The "**EPICNESS**" started 0.8 mile from our end point on Day 2 while hiking Newwood. We came upon a massive pine that had been blown down in a previous storm a week prior. The root ball was huge compared to us. Picture taking ensued. How cool, right? Not so much once it dawned on us that this blowdown extended to other trees along the trail we hiked. They obstructed our view & the trail completely. **WHERE WAS THE TRAIL??** After some maneuvering that included a plunge into a bog, we found blaze after glorious blaze. Bless the powers that be! All the blazed trees stood like sentinels proudly awaiting our arrival. A definite miracle, right?

Aug. 22, 2021:

800 miles had been completed at this point. Well on my way to completing the trail. Simply amazed by what the trail continued to teach me. Stay flexible. Be prepared. Enjoy yourself. Slow down. Interesting how different one year can be from the next. 2020 was very wet & buggy no matter where I hike on the IAT. 2021 was a total reverse. What a perfect year to be on the trail!!!! My knowledge of plants / mushrooms expanded. A network of new friends and acquaintances blossomed. Old friendships strengthened. I hiked

with or met others whose stories were uniquely inspiring. People like Wanda Brown, Ari Clouse, Mrs. Snail, & so many more, too numerous to list yet as important as ever on this journey.

End of Aug./Sept. 2021:

As work started up at the end of August, weekend hiking took over. Weeks sped by in a blur. I lived for that next hike. Polk Co. became a new favorite hiking area of mine. If not hiking, I helped others by providing shuttles, a safe place to stay, & meal time companionship. I was lucky enough having connected with Ari Clouse on Wood Lk that she stayed at my home to resupply before heading back out on the trail. I even shared my experiences with my school district's 4th Graders on what it was like to hike over 1,000 miles. It is so cool how WI students get to learn all about the treasures found in this great state.

Oct. 1-4, 2021:

Another Mammoth Challenge was completed. We had an extended weekend of glorious fall hiking through parts of Barron, Washburn, & Burnette counties! Our first day was filled with beautiful weather & popping fall colors. The second day was wet as in "pouring buckets" wet. Started just in time for our CR. How considerate **NOT!** Days 3 & 4 had cloud cover & cooler temps which were perfect for hiking & exploring as I made my way home. These hikes all reinforced the idea of being flexible. Nature does that to a person. In reality it is a balm for the soul.

Nov. 14, 2021:

Finishing the East Bification meant that this time I had completed both for this saunter. How awesome! Only 0.8 mile separated me from becoming a 1,000 Miler 2.0. LOL! It's what I like to call my second journey. **ALMOST DONE? REALLY??** How could that be? My mind wasn't really sure it was ready to be done. Once again patience would be the name of the game. My

journey would be put on hold till my husband could join me in January 2022. Quite a lesson considering it would be about a 2.5 month wait for 0.8 mile.

Jan. 30, 2022

I did it! After a 2.5 month wait (frustrating at times), my second IAT Journey came to an end. My first completion was by myself. Fitting as I had started it on my own. This time I celebrated with family and friends. The waiting, the planning to get to this point was so worth it. What better place to celebrate than close to my childhood home & at Parallel 44 Winery. Definitely the best of both worlds!

The lessons from my journeys will stick with me the rest of my life. I thought I knew what patience & flexibility were since I work in special ed. Boy, was I wrong. I had these for others in spades. When it came to myself & accomplishing my goals, there was no grace. These lessons have turned into blessings. I do have a multitude of those. Blessings of all the great opportunities, fantastic weather, & amazing accommodations. Blessings too of all the family, friends, volunteers, Chapter Coordinators, Trail Angels, & even total strangers who helped me so much along this journey with a multitude of support & encouragement. Without it, my saunter on this trail (while doable) would have been incredibly difficult. Because of this kindness, my goal to help others complete their IAT journey led to a second finish for myself. What is my next goal you ask? Hmmm...

...the Pinhoti Trail is always calling my name. Anyone interested in joining?
LOL!

Let me end with an inspirational quote from a beloved character of mine:
"Always remember you are Braver than you believe, Stronger than you seem, Smarter than you think." AA Milne (Winnie-the-Pooh)