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IAT Section Hike Itinerary

As a homeowner living in a log house near the tip of a dead end lake road in rural Northwest Wisconsin, I found myself with the luxury of enjoying daily road walks. Often I walked with a dog or strolled with children and at times took to a fast run to pick up girls from the bus drop off! Time moves on and our five daughters graduated and sadly Koda our Bernese Mountain Dog passed. I continued to walk the road but I needed a renewed purpose for my walk. As a camping family, we visited and hiked in many of the State Parks enjoying the woods and outdoors! Strangely, I do not recall how I became knowledgeable of the Ice Age Trail of Wisconsin, however I enjoyed hiking, and I had a hunger to start an adventure!

My husband (thank him very much), whole heartedly supported my quest and agreed to drop me off and pick me up. When you walk a trail solo, it is a good feeling to see a familiar face walking in to greet you! On a warm January day in 2019, an easy ride found us at the Western terminus ready to explore the Ice Age Trail. The start of the winter season had little snow and I easily hiked the St. Croix Falls Segment and the connecting roads to the Gandy Dancer Segment. Snow fell heavily for the next couple of months forcing a wait to continue until late spring, however it only took that one starting segment to spark a determined interest in hiking the complete IAT Trail.



During the spring months of late March, through June, I hiked the Gandy Dancer, Trade River, Straight River, Straight Lake, Pine Lake, McKenzie Creek, Indian Creek, Sand Creek, Timberland Hills, Grassy Lake, Bear Lake, Tuscobia, and Hemlock Creek Segments along with any connecting routes. Several highlights of these segments included the Beaver Dams and several high water crossings!

Hemlock Creek Segment

It was late spring, the weather had warmed and after crossing paths with a junior bear cub and a mama bear with her three cubs, we voted two to zero to postpone hiking the Northern and Southern Blue Hills. One day I was hiking a connecting route quite quickly (perhaps even running) in order to escape the buzz of the mosquitoes when a lady pulled her car over and asked if I was in need of help. Apparently unaware I was a hiker and the car following me was my husband, she assumed I might be in trouble - given a chance people are nice and willing to help! We soon invested in mosquito nets in order to continue on with the Chippewa Moraine, Harwood Lakes, Firth Lake, and Chippewa River Segments; enjoying a lovely visit at the Chippewa Moraine Interpretive Center where I invested in the IAT maps and Guidebook. A note to self; buying maps and books before hitting the trail makes the hike a whole lot easier! The summer was spent on the connecting roads from the Chippewa River Segment to the Lake Eleven Segment.

My childhood home was near Medford and rather than battle the summer bugs and critters of the northern woods we again voted to wait with the north central and eastern wooded segments and jumped forward to Marathon County and enjoyed the remaining summer hiking the connecting routes from the Kettlebowl Segment south, along with the Plover River, Dells of the Eau Claire, Thornapple Creek, Ringle, New Hope Iola Ski Hill, Skunk and Foster Lakes, Waupaca River, Hartman Creek, Emmons Creek, Deerfield, Bohn Lake, Greenwood, Mecan River, Wedde Creek, Chaffee Creek, and John Muir Park Segments. The John Muir Park segment was inspiring; the Hartman Creek area provided a nice camping area and a birthday hike shared with my sisters; a stop and stare moment when a very large and growly black bear

(thankfully determined to find a trout dinner) crossed my path along the Dells of the Eau Claire segment; a Bohn Lake segment that was definitely flooded; and a hike along the Ringle Segment just days before the apprehension of a fellow held up in that dirt bunker :D (where a heavy downpour may have kept me safe from any human encounters); and I found myself definitely mixed up in a maize within the New Hope Iola Ski Hill segment! I had read if the trail divides and you can not determine a trail marker; keep going straight! At that point in my hike I downloaded the Guthook app!

We skipped ahead to enjoy the Devils Lake Segment and a camp out with family members. While hiking the segment, a gentleman literally stumbled into me - dehydrated, bruised and bleeding from a fall he had taken the night before; he was in desperate need of help. Calling 911 kept me on the phone for an extended amount of time which became the only hike where I lost total phone connection due to a dead battery. Emergency help arrived and it turned out to be a good day where my hike put me in the right spot to help a fellow hiker.

During late summer we hiked the Portage Canal Segment, the CR to the Devil's Lake Segment, Sauk Point, Merrimac, Gibraltar Rock, Fern Glen, City of Lodi, Eastern Lodi Marsh, Lodi Marsh, Springfield Hill and Cross Plain segments and more connecting roads, taking extra time to enjoy Parfreys Glen, daring past the closed trail to peek at the waterfall!

We enjoyed a hike and summer picnic with family while completing the Valley View, Madison, and Verona segments and connecting roads. We played a game of bocce' ball while we trail walked just to say we could! In September I hiked the Pike Lake and Holy Hill Segments while camping during the Holy Hill Craft Fair. The Holy Hill segment was a very peaceful trail but the hike along the path taken often by monks is in itself a humbling experience.

With the changing of the leaves in fall, we knew we needed to be back into the woods! We went back to complete the segments we had left to the mosquitoes and walked the Southern and Northern Blue Hills, Lake Eleven, and Jerry Lake Segments. I had not intended to walk the entirety of Jerry Lake in one outing but this was the one time I messed up on my pick up. It was late October and I forged on to the end of the segment. Darkness, along with the howl of coyotes, convinced me of the need for a better light source other than my cell phone!

Jerry Lake Segment



As the snows started in late fall, I layered up and continued with the Mondeaux Esker, East Lake, Pine Line, Rib Lake, Wood Lake, Timberland, Camp 27, Newwood, Averill-Kelly Creek Wilderness, Turtle Rock, Grandfather Falls, Underdown and Alta Junction Segments. The Holidays gave us an opportunity to enjoy having children home and we shared a hike with our daughters enjoying the Devil's Staircase, Arbor Ridge, Indian Lake and Table Bluff Segments. It is sad the Monticello tunnel is closed since it is a very awesome part of Wisconsin's history - and yes, we checked it out!

Grandfather Falls Area Connecting Route

While waiting for the northern snows to melt we completed a couple of winter hikes, working on the Janesville Segment along with many of the Southern connecting roads. Due to several very deep snow falls in February, we did not venture back to the northern trails until early March when I hiked the Highland Lakes Eastern and Western Segments and soon realized if I was intent on hiking in the deep snow I just

might be smart to invest in snowshoes! With that wise purchase I soon continued on through the Old Railroad, Lumbercamp and Kettlebowl Segments. The Kettle bowl proved to be quite challenging as the snow was still very deep, taking over an hour to cover a mile. Darkness still came early and we managed to get off the trail just barely before running out of light. I had not expected to need my newly purchased head lights and so of course I did not carry them - lesson not learned!

Once the snow melted in later Spring I completed the Harrison Hills and Parish Hills Segments. Hiking as a segment hiker, one can choose to do an individual segment East to West or West to East. I tackled the Parish Hills segment East to West choosing to ford the Prairie River at the end thinking I would remove my boots and wade across. With the heavy spring melt the trail leading to the river turned out to be extremely wet and so the river crossing did not matter as my boots were already drenched. I retired those boots and moved on to my second pair of hikers - shoes matter!

Safety worries due to Covid was becoming a concern and we kept the hike to segments where hiking traffic was low. I completed the CR from Manitowoc south and hiked through LaBudde Creek, Greenbush, Parnell, Milwaukee River, Kewaskum, Southern Kewaskum, and West Bend segments.

Although I was able to complete a few more connecting roads, continuing the hike was soon put on pause due to the greater risk of the spread of Covid. Unfortunately the Segments I had left involved a stay over which we were not willing to risk....#hike on hold.

March 2021 ✓ all vaccinated!

After a long winter hunkered down I was definitely eager to get back to the trail and finish! During early Spring I was able to complete connecting roads and the Cedar Lakes, Slinger, Loew Lake, Monches, and Merton segments. In early April, we worked our way through the southern segments going back to hike Montrose, Brooklyn Wildlife; Monticello, and Albany segments; and also the Janesville to Milton, Milton, Storrs Lake, Clover Valley, Whitewater Lake, Blackhawk, Blue Spring Lake, Stony Ridge, Eagle, Scuppernong, Waterville, Lapham Peak, Delafield, and Hartland, segments.

Life happens and our first grandchild decided to arrive early! The hike was happily put on pause so we could make our way East to Connecticut. Returning in late May, I wrestled with the need to put the garden in and the urgency to finish the hike. In between seeding we made six trips to the Eastern side of the state and hiked hard to finish with the connecting routes and the segments of City of Manitowoc, Dunes, City of Two Rivers, Point Beach, Mishicot, East Twin River, Tisch Mills, Kewaunee River, Forestville, and Sturgeon Bay; finishing the IAT at the Eastern terminus on June 28, 2021.

Finishing the trail was bitter sweet; the lessons learned will stay with me: acquire a map; have back up; wet feet do not matter; and the trail offers way more than a path to walk!

Linda Vanderloop