

I started hiking the Ice Age Trail in the fall of 2020, mostly doing 'out and back' as I live near LaBudde and the northern Kettles. Soon realized this was not sustainable. Searching FaceBook, I found and joined several groups devoted to hiking the IAT. One group was the GetOffTheCouch group. I did many hikes on Saturdays with this group, meeting many nice folks. I did not hike with the goal of becoming a thousand miler, but as I recorded the miles, I knew it was attainable.

Purchasing an e-bike really allowed me to explore more and start adding the miles. The downside is I spent more time hiking solo. Once the trail became snow covered, I focused on the CR's. At first those were the dreaded miles, but it was not long and I actually enjoyed the solitude of the backroads in winter.

Hiking the trail took me to parts of the state I probably never would have experienced. Places like the beaver dams in the Blue Hills, the Chippewa Flowage, the St Croix area and the beautiful landscapes of the Dells of Eau Claire and Grandfather Falls.

Springtime hikes offer a unique experience, before the trees leaf. I relished the ability to see through the woods and could actually see the features that the Ice Age Trail was designed to showcase. Fall is especially nice when the trees change colors and the temps cool down.

My most memorable section was Tisch Mills and sitting by the creek on a late fall afternoon, basking in the sun listening to the water rippling over the rocks.

Being a section hiker I pretty much bounced all over WI. If opportunity arose on the RideShare FB group, or the GOTC group, I took advantage of the shuttle. Being retired afforded flexibility. The further away from home, I combined into multi-day trips. If just one night, I usually found a local hotel. Used less than ten hotels. If more than one night, I found either county campgrounds or state campgrounds. Favorite campgrounds were Brunet State Park, Murphy Flowage and Interstate Park. My nemesis hiking was the 3 h's (heat, humidity and hills). I found I prefer the flies over the 3 h's, prefer mosquitoes over the flies, prefer the ticks over the mosquitoes, prefer rain over the ticks and prefer cold over the rain.