

# 1000 Miler Application

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I did not set out with the objective of hiking the complete Ice Age Trail. We moved to Lodi, Wisconsin in 2016 and due to spinal-fusion a number of years earlier, my passion for running had evolved into a love of hiking. I discovered Gibraltar Rock and Devil's Lake 'in my backyard', and when I retired in 2017 spent much time hiking. But then I ruptured my Achilles playing pickleball and during recovery my knees which have had multiple surgeries, started to "complain to me" again. I visited a UW orthopedic surgeon who suggested "have you considered walking more flat grounds vs bluffs and tough terrain?". At this point, it was time to find another doctor. In addition, at this time, along comes a global pandemic.... What a great opportunity for both my physical and mental health, and to see how my 60+ year old body can 'discover Wisconsin'! So as part of my rehab/recovery, I started branching out on my hiking and discovered this Wisconsin gem of nature – the Ice Age Trail.

With Lodi being home, I didn't have too long to travel for much of the early IAT. I started south from Lodi to Cross Plains and north to Baraboo and the Western Bifurcation. Retired, with time on my side, I required no shuttles because I just did "out & backs" for the first 350 miles of the IAT.

I ventured over to Kettle Moraine with neighbors (the Onofreys) – Parnell, Holy Hill, Blue Spring. My relationship with the IAT was evolving: from casual acquaintance to friendship to infatuation to "Head over Heels" Love!!

There is such diverse beauty in the Ice Age Trail from Parkland to the Bluffs, from Urban to the Northwoods! Add the ever-changing appearances and challenges with the passage of seasons and each hike begins with the question of "what awe-inspiring experience awaits me today"?

One of my earliest discoveries was that Connecting Routes were not a liability or shortcoming of the IAT. I moved from tolerating the CRs to embracing them as a unique part of the IAT that highlights many of the communities and people that make up the beautiful state of Wisconsin. I never looked to shorten a CR, but explored every documented mile.

As we grow older, I believe we still need challenges and objectives that are stretches and keep us young in spirit. Mine was being like a 3 year-old that you try to help and being told "I do it myself". Only when I had friends who wanted to hike with me or my wife on vacation in Door County did I use a shuttle which was less than 10% of the time. I didn't want to 'bother' the trail angels (although I am volunteering as one now). So, me and my trusty Schwinn navigated all the country roads, gravel roads, logging roads in rain, snow, ice, heat.... I became adept at mapping out bike routes that attempted to minimize elevation gain and wind direction (thank you Google Maps and Weather Channel app). But I must admit, that more than once as I peddled up an icy gravel road with temperatures in the teens, single digit windchills and frozen water bladder & gaiter, I questioned my sanity (along with if I would ever get feeling back in my toes and fingers)! It makes me realize the evolution and growth of my hiking confidence.... From early on doing 6-8 total miles on flat out & back hikes to 14 mile bike shuttles

followed by 14 mile hikes through extremely challenging terrain far from anyone. Looking back, it's very cool to realize that 'hiking maturation' process.

What a fun and amazing journey. Always feels great to achieve a significant objective; but it's sad that the planning, bike shuttling and discovering each of the 121 segments and the many connecting routes is complete. I'd like to think that the objective is accomplished, but the IAT experience is far from done. Looking to return to the Northwoods & Kettle Moraine and continuing with my home segments of Lodi and Devil's Lake.... And grow my IAT volunteer activity to give back to something that has given me so much! And I would be remiss if I didn't conclude with a big thank you to the IAT staff and all the volunteers that make the Ice Age Trail a growing, evolving Wisconsin marvel of nature.

Attached is an excel spreadsheet that captures my 198 days on the trail. All of it is recorded on Strava. I became so obsessed with my tracking that I went back and did 80 of the early miles over again to have it chronicled on Strava.