

Donna Piotrowski --1000 Miler Essay - Portage/Waupaca County Chapter

Started the adventure of the Ice Age Trail on March 11, 2018, in Waushara County at Wedde and Chaffee Creek Segments with a few friends. Afterwards stopped at a local Pub called Joann's for an Elk burger. So good stopped a few more times when in the area. In 2020 when Covid hit, nothing was open, but gas stations and grocery stores. People were too nervous to ride together, so I started going out and back. Hiked in Marathon and Langlade Counties and could be home before dark. Picked these trails because there are less people. When Covid level got reduced we then started again with people wearing masks in cars but not on the trail. I hiked all four seasons each one brings a different look to the trail and challenges. Parking in winter gets interesting and summer brings farm equipment down the roads.

Driving in the state is what I truly enjoyed. Seeing towns, I never heard of, and a few roads weren't sure they were really roads. I now know how far 1.67 miles is to hike and where good bathrooms are. In winter to keep your cell phone alive is to put a hand warmer in the same pocket and keep your water inside backpack to keep it from freezing or being too cold to drink. Don't bring food that freezes in the cold. You can't eat it. In summer bring head net and rain gear just in case. Invest in lots of bug spray. You get to read lots of maps, watch a lot of weather reports, road conditions, wind and sun direction, and how many cars to take. Learned to leapfrog cars and crisscross with other hikers.

Had a time where on a narrow CR saw a flatbed truck move way over to the right coming towards me. After he passed, I realized he had trusses on, and the left side hung over by 4 feet. Also, on CR in a 25-mile wind the cars going 65 can move a body off the road. I started turning sideways when cars passed. Stopped and took pictures by the Alaska town sign. When I posted it on Face Book friends thought I was in that state.

Finished on St. Croix Falls segment with two other friends on October 25, 2023, at 5:30p.m. Happy we all got to finish together. Was a very cloudy day and had rained for days prior so very few people were at the park. We all celebrated with some refreshments and took lots of pictures. Still can't believe it!

You learn you can do more than you thought and longer than imagined. Your body lets you know when you're done for the day or at least your feet will.