

Portage Canal Segment (Atlas Map 57f-E)

SNAPSHOT

 **3.6 miles (2.5 IAT, 1.1 CR):** Agency House Rd. to STH-33 Wisconsin River Bridge (south end)



At the Historic Indian Agency House (when open) and Pauquette Park. Restrooms also available at Riverside Park.



From the Fox River.



At the Historic Indian Agency House, STH-33 Portage Canal parking area, Riverside Park and Pauquette Park.



At Pauquette Park.



Hikers will not have any interaction with hunting on this segment.



Dogs must be leashed (8-ft max) and under control at all times.



Segment overlaps Portage Canal Bike Path.



Wisconsin River Levee Trail.



Portions of this segment may be suitable for those using wheelchairs or similar devices.

TRAIL ACCESS AND PARKING

① Agency House Rd. Trail Access (43.56044, -89.43544): From I-39 take STH-33 east for 3.1 mi. At E. Albert St. turn left and then take a quick right onto Agency House Rd. (Rustic Road R69) and go northeast for 0.8 mi. **Parking:** Adjacent to Trail Access.

② STH-33 Wisconsin River Bridge (south end) Trail Access (43.53522, -89.47403): From I-39 take STH-33 east 1.1 mi. **Parking:** Adjacent to Trail Access.

Additional Parking: (i) STH-33 Portage Canal Parking area. (ii) Riverside Park. (iii) Pauquette Park. (iv) City and County public parking areas along the canal.

THE HIKE

This segment takes hikers through one of Wisconsin's most historically significant communities. The Trail's route through Portage, an Ice Age Trail Community, highlights the city's unique geographic location on a narrow neck of land between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers.

You'll briefly travel on Wauona Trail, a street following the canoe portage path used by Indigenous peoples, French explorers, and fur trappers as they moved between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basin. The settlement, which developed because of the resulting traffic, was known as "Wau-wau-ohah," Ho-Chunk for "carry on the shoulder." With the arrival of the French, the area became known as "le portage."

The economic importance of these waterways, and conflicts between the area's Indigenous tribes and American settlers, led to the construction of Fort Winnebago in 1828. The route passes near the Surgeons Quarters, (fortwinnebagosurgeonsquarters.org) the fort's only remaining building, a National Historic Landmark (1828–1845).

The segment also features the Historic Indian Agency House (agencyhouse.org.) Built in 1832, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The U.S. government constructed it as a residence for John Kinzie, the first Indian agent to the Ho-Chunk tribe.

In the 1830s, Indian agents primarily supervised commercial trading between traders and Indians. Over time, their role evolved to negotiating treaties, overseeing treaty terms, and eventually, the removal of tribes from areas procured for white settlement to reservations. Then, Indian agents supervised reservation life in an effort to assimilate Indigenous people into American culture.

The Trail also travels along the Portage Canal, the segment's namesake. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, its construction began in 1838. Use of the canal began in the early 1850s, and boats used the canal until 1951, when the locks were permanently closed.

The Alliance-owned Canal Preserve permanently protects land along the canal for the Ice Age Trail. The City of Portage offers a wide range of amenities befitting an Ice Age Trail Community. Its small town charm and plentiful restaurant options will satisfy any hiker.

From the Trail access and parking area on Agency House Road, cross a footbridge and walk on a flat, wide, tree-lined, packed-gravel path following the east bank of the Portage Canal. Along the way, boundary markers indicate when you enter and exit the Alliance-owned Canal Preserve. Arrive at another parking area, just north of STH-33. (From here, the Fort Winnebago Surgeons Quarters is a 0.5-mile side trip [one way] northeast on STH-33.)

Hike 0.2 miles through the STH-33 parking lot and then east on STH-33, walking along the shoulder. At Wauona Trail (a street), turn right and follow it south for 0.7 miles. At Morgan Street, turn right, following it west to East Mullett Street. Go straight across East Mullett Street to a paved path along the canal. Follow it, heading southwest, paralleling the canal.

Upon reaching busy Wisconsin Street (USH-51), cross at the crosswalks and join the bike path on the north side of the canal. You'll pass a pedestrian bridge leading to the Portage Levee, a shared-use path along the Wisconsin River, from which you can view a historic restored watchtower. When you reach



the Wisconsin River lock at the south end of the canal, jog to the right on Lock Street and then follow Edgewater Street to the left.

Continue on Edgewater Street, passing 506 West Edgewater Street, a large white Greek Revival-style house built in 1906 by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Zona Gale, for her parents. It is now home to the Portage Women's Civic League. Gale's study and other exhibits on local history can be seen nearby at the Museum at the Portage (portagemuseum.org) about half a mile off the Trail at 804 MacFarlane Road in a home she shared with her husband, William Breese. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner also called Portage home.

Near the segment's end, you'll arrive at the STH-33 bridge across the Wisconsin River. At the northwest corner of the bridge crossing is Pauquette Park, named after Pierre Pauquette, the son of a Frenchman and a Ho-Chunk woman. An agent for the American Fur Company, Pauquette also operated a ferry and trading post at the site between the mid-1820s and 1834. Follow STH-33 across the river and finish your hike at the bridge's south end.

AREA SERVICES



Portage: Restaurant, grocery store, convenience store, general shopping, lodging, library and

medical service. On Trail. Most services on USH-51/STH-16/Wisconsin St. and on STH-33. For area info, contact the Portage Area Chamber of Commerce (608-742-6242 or 800-474-2525, portagewi.com). Train service at the Portage Amtrak Station (800-872-7245, amtrak.com), an unstaffed station consisting of a small waiting room with no station services.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Man Mound Park: See [Baraboo Segment](#), p. 198

Aldo Leopold Legacy Center: See [Devil's Lake Segment](#), p. 203

International Crane Foundation (ICF): See [Devil's Lake Segment](#), p. 203

Every day was an experience. I have lived most of my life in Wisconsin, yet I did not know the state. I learned as I went. Every corner, town, and view had something to teach me.

MARK W. ASPLUND, THOUSAND-MILER



AMY BAWER

Portage Canal Segment: A pedestrian bridge spans the Wisconsin River.