

Roxane Kelley

I started my IAT Journey, like many others, during Covid (September 13, 2020) to get out of the house. I joined the Facebook groups and was enjoying the posts all summer of 2020, the photos looked beautiful. I didn't know much about the trail except for the blazes I'd seen for years while hiking the Butler Lake Loop in Northern Kettle Moraine forest. I purchased the guide and maps and finally decided to try my first hike on the Milwaukee River segment in FDL County (closest segment to my home). My husband dropped me off after dropping my car off at one end. Needless to say, I was hooked. I've always loved hiking, especially in the Kettle Moraine area.

The first fall was all segments close to home, either out and backs or my husband would shuttle me. Winter hiking in the southern part of the state was fairly easy (many people on the trails) and I didn't need snowshoes.

My goal was to finish the trail in 3 to 4 years, my chocolate lab, Emma, likes to hike with me and I wanted to finish before she could no longer hike. In April, 2021, I started hiking with groups and met people I call friends today. I knew I needed to find people to hike with, especially Up North, because I didn't want to hike alone.

The rest of 2021 and 2022, I hiked many week-ends and the miles steadily rose. Completed all the way to Sturgeon Bay and all up to Langlade County. About 100 miles was completed with my sister-in-law, Wendy. Thank you so much Wendy!

The winter of 2022/2023, I only needed sections way Up North. I tried snowshoeing. It took me 3 hours to hike 3.9 miles. I wanted to work on the CR by Cornell but it either snowed there or by FDL and I didn't want to drive. I decided to wait for spring and started working on the Western Bifurcation instead (already completed the Eastern side). I'm about half done and will finish that this winter.

In May, I joined a great group of ladies and hiked over 60 miles in 4 days and completed many sections needed in the Northwest part of the state.

During the summer of 2023, I found groups to hike with and filled in gaps in the North part of the state.

During the first week of October, 2023, I found another great group of ladies to hike with in Rusk county and was down to only 3 segments after that.

My sister and I had planned to hike Jerry Lake since the summer of 2022 but life always got in the way. We finally completed that the second weekend of October. It was supposed to rain all day but ended up just cloudy and cool (perfect hiking weather).

The next week-end I completed Gandy Dancer. We had camped at Interstate State Park over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July week and I had planned to hike then but it was too hot. Middle of October was much better.

I saved Springfield Hill in Dane county for my last segment because I wanted my kids and other family members to hike with me. It was very bittersweet. I'm sad that the journey is over, all the planning where I'm going to hike and weekends away with my husband and Emma. But now I can hike all winter on sections close to home and next spring and summer on segments I want to visit again.

I have to thank my husband, Kevin, because without his support and shuttling, I never would have been able to complete the trail. Also thank you to my daughters and their families for hiking with me on some segments, it meant the world to me.



First hike, 9/13/2020, Milwaukee River Segment in FDL County.



Emma hiking on the Chippewa River Segment, June 2022.





Last segment, Springfield Hill, October 28, 2023.