

A huge debt of gratitude goes out to all those that have “blazed” the trail before me, both literally and figuratively! Our journey would not have been possible without the vision and tireless efforts of all the individuals that have given their time and energy to make the Ice Age Trail what it is today, which is an amazing and beautiful gift in our own backyard. So THANK YOU!!

It was definitely love at first hike for us. By the time we hit mile one on the Loew Lake segment, hiking the IAT in its entirety was a foregone conclusion. Becoming members of the IAT Alliance and ordering the current Atlas and Guidebook gave us our timeline, 2020 to 2022. And so it began... November 21, 2020, Loew Lake segment, 4.9 miles out and 4.9 miles back. We were all in and excited to plan our next adventure, however hiking and winter were two words that I rarely used in the same sentence. It did not take us long to discover the joy of hiking during Mother Nature’s coldest months. There was something indescribably beautiful about hiking in winter, especially during or soon after a snowfall. I loved the solitude and stillness of nature during these months, and being able to see and appreciate the geological features of the landscape in their simple beauty and elegance.

As Winter turned to Spring, the excitement of new beginnings surrounded us on the trail. Woodland flowers started to peek out, grasses emerged, and trees began to leaf out dotting the predominately brown landscape with splashes of color. Frogs, toads, birds and other animals serenaded us with their calls and songs as we slip slid our way along the trail. Connecting routes were a popular hiking choice for us during this time. We enjoyed walking through the small towns, discovering towns we had never heard of and being constantly reminded of how beautiful rural Wisconsin is.

Fast forward to Fall, because we did! Summer hiking was not for us :)

Fall, on the other hand, was my favorite time on the trail. I loved hearing the crunch of leaves under my feet, seeing the trees ablaze with colors, finding mycelium in all sizes, shapes and colors, and just breathing in the crisp autumn air. I was in constant awe of nature’s beauty when I hiked in Fall, as the hundreds of pictures on my phone will prove. I was continually gifted with amazing views from lakes surrounded by trees showcasing their brilliant yellows, reds and oranges to tiny mycelium growing under moss covered tree roots. The beauty of the IAT was found in both the big and small for me.

I have so many fond memories of my time hiking the IAT, but there are some definite standouts- spending quality time with family and friends when they hiked with us, the overwhelming sense of peace I felt while hiking the Jerry Lake segment, especially on the Lost Esker, camping at Brunet Island, eating at Dylan’s Dairy, discovering the Mondeaux Dam Lodge, seeing a tree fall naturally in the forest, camping at Hartmann Creek and waking up to 4 inches of snow due to an unexpected early fall snowstorm, crossing the fords, and the amazing celebration that our friends surprised us with when we finished our journey at the Eastern Terminus on November 12, 2022.

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