

Hiking the Ice Age Trail led me on a path of growth both physically and emotionally. While I've participated in many endurance events including long distance cycling and running, those endeavors always had a more immediate finish line. I loved the challenge of a long range goal, with each segment and CR finished mini rewards on the journey to completing the entire trail. The first thing I did when I returned from a hike was to color in the segment/CR I did on the IAT big map and record my data. This was my short term reward. In the beginning those colored areas were such a minuscule portion of the map, but I never wavered in my desire to finish the entire IAT. To commemorate this commitment my IAT license reads DTRMND.

My hikes started with shorter mileage and within close proximity to my house and over the four years progressed to longer mileage and travels to more distant parts of the state. I started with one good friend and by the end of the trail I had hiked with over 50 different people, many of whom are now friends. I loved the relief from stress and anxiety as I escaped into the woods and even came to love the planning aspects of section hiking and the CRs. Once I reached 1000 miles, I organized several multiday hikes to complete the counties I still needed, including organizing groups of people who wanted to join with me and planning the routes, hotels, parking and shuttling, restaurants, etc.

I hiked in all four seasons in all types of weather from extreme heat to way below freezing. I bought mounds of clothing and equipment so as to always be prepared, some I've never used but was glad to have, just in case. I made beginner mistakes during my first few hikes such as leaving a key in the parked car, forgetting boots and needing to hike in ballet flats, and tripping over improperly tied hiking boots. But I learned from those mistakes and became quite proficient at always making sure I had everything I needed in a properly fitted backpack with appropriate hydration and nutrition readily available.

Now that I've finished I'm hoping to volunteer with the IATA and hike with others who need a partner for various segments on their journeys. I've learned a lot and want to share that knowledge with others as they progress along the trail.

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