

If Grandma Gatewood could do the entire AT, I could certainly do the IAT, right? After all, it would be easier since it's in our home state. So I proposed my crazy idea to my husband, Dale, who had some experience due to hitchhiking down south after high school. I really didn't know if I could do it, but I was ready to try it finally after doing a section here and there over the years while our son was growing up. We decided together to section hike from West to East.

On June 15, 2017 we drove to the western terminus and started out with paper maps from the IAT Atlas. After getting turned around, we realized before leaving Interstate State Park that we would need the app for navigation. The Thousand Miler Wannabees on Facebook was always extremely helpful with all of our questions. There were so many mosquitos in June, we decided to put off hiking until fall. After starting back up at the beginning of September 2017 with our new daypacks, we hiked weekends through the middle of October and still didn't make it through Polk and Burnett counties and my knees were in rough shape from all of the rocks and roots we were walking over. I got some knee braces and naproxen and continued.

In April 2018 there was a huge snowstorm in Wisconsin, but a few days after it started getting really nice and warm outside and we were eager to begin our hiking season. Maybe a little too eager. We drove all the way to the western side of Wisconsin only to find knee-deep snow, and sometimes the drifts were up to my thighs, but we somehow made it through 5 miles that day. At one point our dog, Annie, started sinking in the melting snow and just had no energy to go farther, so Dale carried her. We were down to our t-shirts and sweating due to having to trudge on through the snow. We knew we had to either buy snowshoes or we wouldn't be unable to continue for the weekend. We bought them in Spooner and off we went again the next day. Due to the quickly melting snow the snowshoes didn't end up helping that much because we would break through the snow anyway.

On the Grassy Lake Segment in May 2018, even though Dale advised me otherwise, I decided to wear knee high rubber boots due to the muddy conditions, but sunk down into ruts on the logging road so deep that I thought I may need help getting out of the situation. That was a rough and scary time, but in the end it turned out in my favor because the rubber boots moved around on my heel so much that the skin on the entire heel of my foot rubbed loose and a week later I was finally permanently rid of the very painful corn on that heel that I had been dealing with for years.

My note about the Bear Lake Segment says faces, flowers, ticks. Ceramic faces in tree stumps, crashed airplanes, and we camped by a calm lake with loons.

Things got real when on the Hemlock Creek Segment we noted IAT blazed posts that were bit into and missing some of the wood, likely the work of bears. It became common-place to lock up our scooter and drive to our starting point, hike to the scooter and then our dog Annie and I would wait for Dale to come back with the truck to pick us up. I started thanking Dale for coming back and said he came back for Annie. We always had a good laugh about that. As a dog owner, it's a goal to tire out your dog, and really nice to see them sleeping hard after a good hike. Annie would curl up next to my foot or the pack and would wait for her ride home or back to where we were staying the night. She also became accustomed to getting muddy or going right through streams because she quickly realized the mud cooled her paws. We always brought water for Annie as well as ourselves, but she preferred drinking out of streams, lakes, and puddles. Although she is not able to hike the longer distances anymore, she sure had some great times on the trail including her Gotcha Day April 4 in 2020 and again on Mother's Day about a month later.

We saw so many mushrooms along the way and it kind of became my thing to point them out and take photos of them. I plan to make a photo book of our adventures.

On September 10, 2018 we met Annie Weiss just as she was coming out of the Blue Hills Segment and later read her husband, Brian's book about her record setting trip.

We really didn't encounter very many other hikers on the northern segments, many times none at all, but on September 22, 2018 we did on the Chippewa Moraine Segment.

Buzz Meyer shuttled us between Camp 27 and Newwood and I saw a cougar cross the dirt road up ahead of our vehicle right after we got in our truck to go meet Buzz for a 27 mile shuttle. We were also able to hike with my cousin, Karen for the Grandfather Falls Segment and later the Ringle Segment, since she lives in Wausau.

Marathon County brought us some hot and humid days, but that set us up for hiking in every month of 2021 including the day in March 2021 when we used both of our vehicles to walk a CR in Waushara County between Heffron Rd at Akron Ave to CTH-O and I forgot my car key in my locked car. Luckily my husband found a nice farmer that was willing to help us out and give us a ride to our truck.

The Devil's Lake Segment proved terrifying for me since I am afraid of heights, but I persevered and was rewarded a while after reached the top and continuing along the trail because we met our fellow Wannabees on November 7, 2021 that were handing out SnOTT (Snail On The Trail) Patches. Willowood Inn was a really cute and clean motel just outside Devil's Lake State Park that we stayed at.

Our Granddaughter was born on December 23, 2021 and had her first hike with us on September 17, 2022 on the Blackhawk Segment.

We took both of our dogs Annie and Chili on the Eagle Segment on October 1, 2022.

Manitowoc is my hometown and my Dad has land in the country west of Manitowoc. The IAT has a CR right past his land, so after hiking that day we met him and other family out there on Easter Sunday 2023.

Shin splints were a real problem for me on much of the trail because we would section hike and then I work a desk job all week long, so I never stayed in great shape until the Kewaunee and Door County when we continued for 3 days, with one day off, then another 3 days. I was really surprised, that really worked well for my body. On our last day we did the entire Sturgeon Bay Segment and ended at 6:10 pm the night before we had to go to work the next morning. That was our longest hike in a single day on the entire trail.

As you may have noticed, we tried to hike mostly in chronological order from West to East with only a few exceptions. On July 11, 2020 we hiked with our son, Wes who lives in Milwaukee and wanted to hike the Milwaukee River Segment and a little of Parnell Segment. Just a couple other areas we went out of chronological order slightly due to weather, ferry closures, closures due to hunting, wetness/water problems, bugs, etc reasons.

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