

I never intended to hike the whole trail. I had fallen in love with long distance hiking a few years before in Nepal and was looking for a way to hike like that again but closer to home. I decided the IceAge Trail was perfect. I wasn't even going to walk all the segments. I thought I'd bike the rail trail segments and hike the rest. I wanted to hike from west to east, in order. I could follow the guide book easier that way. And certainly, I wasn't going to walk those long road connectors!

It was also a rather stressful time in my life....lots of family caregiving, and I thought little mini vacations north would fit in and be a wonderful break from reality.

So, I booked an airbnb, and off we went to start my adventure. The first day changed my plan. It was Nov 13, 2017. Snow on GandyDancer ended my biking idea. Then I decided to start hiking at Trade River, and since those CR's were so short, well, why not walk them? After 4 days, I was hooked, but those long drives from southern Wi would be a problem. So, I spent the next couple of years hiking closer to home, stealing days as I could, and adding a few mini vacations north. I hiked mostly solo. I loved the quiet, the calm. The trail was my confidant, my therapist; it took me to places I would never have thought to visit. I saw beautiful Wisconsin like I had never seen it before; I learned if I didn't see a yellow blaze every few minutes, I needed to check my route. My husband shuttled me, or I did my own bike shuttle. He went fishing. I walked. It was fun.

Then he got very sick, and my hiking pretty much stopped for a year. Soon after he died, the trail was calling to me again. I needed fresh air. But now I also needed help with shuttling. I met Tina on ThousandMilerWannabes. She wanted to hike the trail in one year. I wanted to find someone to do the western bifurcation with me. 10 months later, when she finished the trail, we had hiked over 300 miles together, become good friends, and had such a good time doing it! I still wasn't hiking those long CRs, tho.

I finished all but my last two segments soon after that. Now what? Tina kept telling me I was silly not to finish the whole trail; I had done so much of it. And I did want to walk. All of a sudden I found myself calling on Trail Angels for shuttlers or tossing my bike in the car, and I was off tackling 200 miles of road connectors! And then I started liking the road walks. The trail was again taking me to places I would never think of going to. The trail community showed me that people were still kind and generous in the hard times we all had been going thru, and I was making friends with cows and goats and geese! ( but, I would still not recommend saving all the long CRs for the end!)

I finished at the WesternTerminus in St Croix Falls on Oct 27, 2022 with friends joining me for the hike. It was wonderful. I think of the trail as I do of life. Full of ups and downs, twists and turns, roots and rocks. And I'm getting back on it as soon as I can.

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