

1000 Mile Journey (1146.7 to be exact)

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It has been said that every journey starts with the first step. I believe this is true however much more goes into making that first step than just lacing up those shoes.

How it all began

At the end of 2020 I looked at my activity tracking app and realized that of the 900 miles I ran, 80% were mostly on the IAT between Scuppernong and Glenbeulah. Looking at the IAT interactive map I realized 80% of the entire trail could be achievable to complete with day trips within 1 year and so I put myself up to the challenge. There were friends that thought this was a great idea (and some thought I was nuts). I expected most would join in for some or all of it. And so, January 2nd 2021 the journey started with the West bend segment as it is close to home. I continued to chip away on the miles through the winter and spring working from Washington county both directions with friends and running groups joining. When summer came along the miles were racking up and the travel was getting farther from home making the logistics of getting to trail heads and dropping cars more of a challenge. As I got farther from home, the interest and availability of others to join was proving to be an even bigger challenge and so I started bike shuttling 20-25 miles which proved to be a long day. By mid-summer summer of 2021 the dear flies came out with severe attitude problems and the IAT journey was put on hold for a few weeks. Early fall I was working the most southern area of the state and clipping off the miles quickly with all the road connectors and flat rail trails. As fall was upon us and winter was closing in I realized this self-shuttling was not working well with the frosty mornings, frozen fingers and cheeks (both sets!) I realized in October that I was not halfway and the self-bike shuttling was taking many hours of daylight from both the ride and retrieval. I decided to not try to finish the trail in 1 year although it is very achievable with the right planning and support group. So I pushed on and ended 2021 the day after Thanksgiving a few miles short of Montello. 2021 total miles were 526

As I was settled in for the winter of 2021-22, I found my new IAT shuttle partner Zippy on Marketplace. Zippy was a neglected moped that need a bit of work but in no time I had her up and running. The next 621 miles and 26 trips we became travel companions as she rode on the back of the car on a hitch cargo hauler. By May I was ready to hit the trails and finish this journey. I chose the East bifurcation however I will be going back to complete the West the summer of 2023. The northern sections were some of my most memorable ones because of the wilderness and seclusion. There were many weekends when I

would not see anyone else on the trail and occasionally a few cars at trailheads. The Northwest sections proved to also be challenging because of the travel, overnights, and planning. As the summer was winding down and fall was approaching, I pushed even harder to complete before the hunting season closures were in effect. Originally my plan was to finish on the East terminus as it's only a 2 hour drive from my home. With less than 90 miles to go and the next several weekends plotted, travel distances recorded, I decided it was possible to finish both ends in the same day. So on Friday after work on October 28th, I loaded up Zippy and off to St Croix Falls we go. With getting to bed earlier than normal, I woke up at 3:30am and left the hotel at 4:00am headed to Interstate State Park to unload Zippy and drive to finish the final 19 eastern miles starting near Frederic on the Grandy Dancer segment. The first 5 miles were in the dark with frozen fingers and toes. As it warmed up and got light out I dropped clothes to be retrieved later along with Zippy. I made it to the Western Terminus, took a few pictures and off to load up Zippy and drive across the state to Sturgeon Bay to finish the final 9 miles. 4 hours and 45 minutes was closer than driving home and this point. I arrived at Potawatomi State park, unloaded Zippy and off to the trail head where I left off in 2021. By the time I got to the middle of Sturgeon Bay on foot, it was getting dark however I had 800 lumens of headlamp power, enough to see as clear as day. The final few miles were bittersweet, and many thoughts came and went. I made it to the Eastern Terminus at about 8:30 and enjoyed an ice-cold celebratory beer. Perhaps I'm the first to finish both Termini on the same day?

Total miles with Garmin GPS were 1146.7 with counting the several out-n-backs only 1 time. 2021 miles=525.8 with 33 days out =15.9 miles per day. 2022 miles=621 with 26 days out=23.9 miles per day!

Happy IAT hiking, running, and/or walking

Cheers!