

# Walk through winter on the Ice Age Trail

I've never done winter hiking before, but I knew the trails were open all year so I decided to go explore my favorite trail, Lapham Peak, outside of Delafield, Wisconsin.

During the winter months, Lapham Peak is open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. When I arrived at the park I stopped by the parks office to purchase an annual parking pass.

While there I inquired about which trails were open to hikers. I was told the Prairie Path, the Ice Age Trail and any paved trails are open. Several other trails were open to cross-country skiers. The rest were closed during winter months.

I started on the Prairie Path, a large, winding trail on the west side of the park that goes through Evans Prairie, Schoeninger Savannah and Timms Woods.

In warmer weather, the trail would be an easy path to traverse, however, the weather being what it is, the path was muddy and slick. I could understand why the rest of the trails were closed if this seemingly easy trail was so hard to hike. I did not regret purchasing hiking boots and wool socks either.

Winding through parts of the path was the Ice Age Trail. I did not spend as much time on it, but the trail proved to be just as challenging as Prairie Path.

Much of the time I was there, all I saw were browns, whites and the occasional green. When I came across a bush with maybe a dozen red berries on it, I got abnormally excited. Color! There's color in January!

After spending several minutes admiring the berries (but not eating them), I returned to my car. I knew several paved paths also were open to hikers, so I decided to explore the Plantation Path, a paved trail toward the east side of the park. After stopping and chatting with a fellow hiker and his dog (Max) I made my way down the path, taking photos as I went.

So what kind of gear should a person need? For Lapham Peak I wore a good pair of hiking boots with wool socks, a T-shirt, sweater then my winter coat, a thick pair of gloves and a hat that not only covers my head but most of my face and neck as well. Pants too. Hikers will want to wear pants.

While it is winter and not 80 degrees like the summer time, it still is beneficial to bring a bottle of water and stay hydrated. In the time I was there, even though it was 36 degrees, I was breaking out in a sweat hiking up and down muddy and snow-covered hills.

I was surprised at just how many others were there though. When I was driving there, I thought “There won’t be that many people there. It’s winter, it’s cold.” I was wrong.

The lot I parked in, Evergreen Parking, could easily hold over 50 vehicles. It was full nearly to the brim with skiers, hikers and dogs. Then there were more dogs. Did I mention dogs?

There were dogs of every shape and size.

By the end of my journey, I was tired, sweaty and sore.

But I enjoyed every footstep.

Did I mention there were lots of dogs?