Wandering Indiana ~

Fall & Winter Update –

It has been several weeks since discussing wanderings. Fall/Winter is a great time to get out and enjoy God's creation! Read further.

This past week, before the crazy cold and the polar vortex, I was able to enjoy a cool sunny afternoon in Brownsburg, hiking at Arbuckle Acres Park and walking downtown. It was nice to see some of the planning that has created a walkable community come to fruition. I had lunch and meetings in three different locations and was able to walk, enjoy, and limit my personal impact on the environment. I did it the old-fashioned way, taking it upon myself not to drive but to walk to my destinations. Seems like a logical and common-sense approach to the climate change rhetoric by taking care of myself and limiting my environmental footprint without being told by the government and activists. Think about this and how we can all do our part to limit our environmental footprint. (Sorry about the political rhetoric – Not!)

There have been so many wanderings to end 2023 with a bang. I can't even do justice in telling the story, so it will likely be more of a list with a few comments. I fell short of my unstated goal of visiting every state park for the year, which probably started in late October. With the exception of Chain O' Lakes, I was able to visit them all in 2023. Guess which one I am for sure visiting in 2024? We have hiked multiple trails in the past and look forward to that on our next trip. We also plan to rent canoes/kayaks and do some paddling. Stay tuned for updates on that adventure.

Trip #1: So, what do you do on a sunny and cool fall afternoon after church? You wander your way to Terre Haute on US40/Old National Road and find historical sites along the way. Take the drive from Indy and see what you can discover. Have lunch at M. Mogger's Restaurant and Pub and learn about the history associated with this historic building and area while enjoying the fun atmosphere. Now what? Hike off those calories at Turkey Run State Park. Don't be like everyone and go straight to the swinging bridge. Turn right when you get into the park. Go hike Trail #2 and the eastern part of the park. Go see the Narrows Covered Bridge and the Lusk House. Hike back on Trail #1 along Sugar Creek. Very enjoyable and scenic hikes with some history thrown in and fewer park visitors. Still up to hiking? How about taking in Shades State Park? Are you feeling really adventurous and wanting some rugged hiking? Try taking Trail #4 & #5. You really need to be adventurous. There are legs of each of these trails that are rugged, but there are those that are really rugged.

Trip #2: Owen Putnam State Forest and Fish Creek Campground was an interesting side trip west of Spencer. I took a short trail near the campground. Then, off to McCormick's Creek State Park. The tornado that came through on March 31, 2023, really did some significant damage. It was unfortunate from a hiking standing on one hand because many typical trails you would hike were not open. That allowed me to take a trail that I had never seen previously. I hiked Trail #9 and saw the Historic Peden Farm Site. How do you take a supposed negative situation and make it positive? You find other places to explore. Try it out. It was a wonderful new experience.

Trip #3: This trip included O'Bannon Woods State Park/Harrison Crawford State Forest and Leavenworth, Lincoln State Park, and Trail #1 around the lake (check out the Moon Tree and the story behind it). The trip also included Harmonie State Park, which many people don't get to because it is so far south. The park has some easy paved biking trails and a nice view of the Wabash River.

Trip #4: This day, I hit up Spring Mill State Park and took a short hike to Twin Caves and Bronson Cave. I traveled along the future Monon South Rails to Trails route, stopped at Falls of the Ohio State Park in Clarksville, Charlestown State Park, and enjoyed a great view of the Ohio River and the Rose Island hike (thank you, Darrell). Finished with Clifty Falls State Park and Trail #7. What a day trip!



Trip #5: My wife and I drove our son to Chicago, and on our way, the three of us enjoyed a New Year's Day wander to northwest Indiana. We stopped in Valpo and ate at one of my favorite restaurants – Industrial Revolution. We also stopped at the Gabis Arboretum, which was closed; this is twice now that we have attempted to visit. I cannot wait to see this place when it is fully open. We want to see the outdoor model train display. No trip to NW Indiana is complete without driving to Gary and visiting the Jackson 5's Home. It's unfortunate seeing what was once such a great City being in such disrepair. How do we change that course? We also took a side trip to see MLB White Sox and Cubs stadiums. My wife and I wandered home through Crown Point, Cedar Lake, Lowell, Lasalle State Fish and Wildlife Area, and hiked from Lot #9A & B to see the Kankakee River bottoms (pictured here). I had heard about Kankakee Sands and the bison herd and its unique opportunity to restore land to prairie and its former landscape. Do you know where the tallest waterfall is in Indiana? It is in Williamsport. There wasn't much water running, but I bet during a rain event, it is pretty impressive. Stop by and visit and grab some food at the Hot Dog Station. The last visit was to Attica—so much history, nice homes, and old brick streets.

I love to wander! There is so much to do in Indiana. Tell me more places to visit.

~ Jeff Banning