



# RiverBender Blog: Walk This Way

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These boots are made for walkin' and I've walked a hole right through them.

I recently had to say goodbye to my beloved, ratty old pair of tennis shoes after I could no longer ignore the growing hole in the sole. I've had these shoes since right before the pandemic, when my walking hobby really took off. These shoes have walked countless

miles all across the Midwest, but especially in my hometown, where I walked mile after mile around the park over the past few years.

I've always enjoyed being outside and taking walks in nature, but this interest really spiked during the pandemic when, like a lot of people, I needed a way to get out and enjoy some fresh air. At my peak, I was walking six miles a day in 2020, circle after circle around the same path at the local park. No wonder my shoes have literally fallen apart.

While we're no longer in quarantine, this is one habit that stuck with me from the COVID-19 Pandemic. I still take walks as often as possible around town or in local parks. There's something soothing about being outside and walking the same path again and again, hearing the birds chirping, watching the corn change through the seasons.

In a world of go-go-go, it slows me down. It's hard to text or scroll and walk, so I slip my phone in my pocket and ignore it. Everything will still be there in an hour when I pick it up again.

This is one of the great life lessons one has to learn in the 21st century. You aren't missing out by putting away your phone or ignoring the messages that come in. In fact, you're tuning into the world and intentionally interacting with it.

It's easy to get caught up in the huge world that's just a few clicks away on a screen. But to be honest, the world always seems a lot bigger when I focus on my little part of it. By stepping outside and being in nature, I remember that my problems aren't as magnified as social media would have me believe. The world is huge; I am small; life goes on; all I have to do right now is walk.

And whatever is going on in my life that's stressing me out will be solved, one way or another. Walking gives me a chance to think through things, to come up with answers. I try to walk as often as possible, usually two or three times a week when the weather is nice. I no longer have the time (or, honestly, the desire) to walk six miles a day, but I can get in a mile or two, enjoy the fresh air, and figure out some of life's great lessons in the time it takes me to walk a lap around the park.

Throughout my walks, I've watched the seasons change and I've made friends with angry little dogs along my route. I've seen my hometown (and my own life) through a completely new lens.

As the weather gets warmer, I'll be trucking along at the local parks as often as possible — while wearing a brand-new pair of shoes, no less. Maybe I'll see you there.