Week 11, The Tongariro Crossing

On our last morning at the condo in Turangi, we woke up early and hit the road. The weather on the Tongariro Crossing looked good for the first time in a week, and so we decided to give it a shot. The Crossing is a one day, 19.5 km track up and over the saddle and volcanic area between two of the big peaks in Tongariro National Park: Mt. Tongariro and Mt. Nguaruhoe (Mt. Doom from Lord of the Rings). The track is billed as New Zealand's best one day walk, and it lived up to its reputation.

I was nervous about bringing the kids on such a long excursion in imperfect weather, but it turned out to be a great day. The hike was awesome indeed, with so much variety in topography and geology, and so much beauty: there were steaming vents, snow capped peaks, volcanic craters, and big views north over Lake Taupo. Although it took us seven hours without much stopping, the kids both thought it was mentally easier than the first 13 km day on the Abel Tasman Track.

The Crossing was probably the best single day of a great trip, and left us high as we began the long drive south to Dunedin. The next day, we stopped off at the national museum in
Wellington before catching the ferry back to the South Island, but otherwise drove our butts off back to our New Zealand home in still-cold Dunedin, exhausted and ready for a break from travelling.

Alex and I at Red Crater

Jen, Alex, Ellie with Lake Rotoaira and the mighty Lake Taupo in the distance. It was all downhill from this point.
Kaikora Beach sunrise, New Zealand. Jen and I got up early and caught this amazing sight.