We've been back from our big trip for more than two weeks, and it feels good to be here. Getting away and seeing things is great, but I also enjoy letting a place sink into my bones, and that takes good stretches of normal living: weekends close home, the farmer's market, the library, dinner with friends, bike rides, a drive to a nearby beach for a barbeque.

One of the things that I love about Dunedin is that it's so easy to get out of town. With the Otago Peninsula, the ocean, the harbor, and all of the hills, you can drive 20 (or bike 40) minutes and feel like you're in a completely different place. But then, since the city is close, you'll come across a nice cafe in which to linger for a while.

One such place is Port Chalmers, which is Dunedin's port, about a 15 minute drive from downtown toward the mouth of Otago Harbor, though the fastest way for us is to go up-and-over the hill. My favorite cafe is on the main street there and the town's location on the Harbor is stunning by any stretch of the imagination.

On Saturday, weekend before last, while Ellie enjoyed a sleepover with a friend, Jen, Alex, and I drove through Port Chalmers on our way to Murdering Beach to barbeque some sausages and catch the
sunset. Then just today, Jen and I rode a loop, up and over Mt. Carghill Road to Blueskin Road and around to Port Chalmers for some biscuits and tea at the cafe mentioned above. And finally, back up-and-over the hill to home. Both trips were great. On our ride, Jen said, "These people live in paradise."

It's "local" experiences like these that make me feel more like I'm really living here, which I find very satisfying.
Riding into Pt Chalmers, the port ahead.