Several months back, when we arrived in New Zealand, we booked a condo in Queenstown for mid-December. We just returned from our week there, and it was action-packed indeed.

We left on a Saturday morning and on the way, stopped in Naseby for a mountain bike race. We’ve been hearing about the great trails in Naseby since we arrived, so it was nice to finally get a chance to sample them, even if while in the red zone. The riding was reminiscent of (and every bit as good as) the single track in Helena, Butte, and Missoula.

The race was also the Junior XC and Single Speed Otago Championships. The single speeders were a nutty bunch, dressed in costume and required to drink a beer with every lap. Given the heat, the thought of combining beer and mountain bike racing sounded appalling to me, which is a sure sign that I’m too much of a wimp to be a single speeder.
Having attended two mountain bike races here in NZ, I'm struck by the relative lack of elitism in the competitive branch of the sport. At mountain bike races in Montana, the long course can only be ridden by Expert Class racers, which constitute Montana's elite. Here in NZ, on the other hand, you choose the distance you want, and all levels race together. In my opinion, this is a better way to go, both for the organizers, as it attracts more participants, as well as for the racers, who have more choice.

The two hour drive from Naseby to Queenstown was longish after the race, but when we arrived, we were buoyed by the remarkable beauty of the place. Our week was filled with activity. Jen and I went on three early morning rides. All were good, but two of them – Moke Lake and Skipper’s Canyon – were outstanding. We also rode the 7 Mile trail network as a family, and throughout the week carted Alex around to the world class Gorge Canyon Jump Park and Waynard Freeride Park so that he could test his free ride skills. Off the bikes, we went on a family hike from The Remarkables ski field to the top of The Remarkables mountain range for awesome views of Queenstowns, Lake Wakatipu, and the surroundings. And Jen and I went on several outings with Ellie – who enjoys shopping and hanging out in the condo more than hiking and biking – wandering the shops and cafes in Queenstown and nearby Frankton.
Ellie found her own person sized vehicle in a parking garage in Queenstown.

As many of you now know, Alex wrecked at Gorge Canyon and had to spend some time in the hospital. Here’s what happened. After three days of honing his skills on the jumps in Gorge Canyon, Alex was able to negotiate all but the most difficult of the jump trains. The airs were big, making this a heady place to be for a 13 year old. However, after too many hours in the saddle on day three (a misstep on my part) his shorts caught in his seat (another lesson learned) and he crashed while landing a jump. Most of the force of the landing was taken by his hands and stomach on the handlebars, at least this is my theory. He also cracked his helmet after hitting the ground. The result was sprained wrists and a bruised kidney. Jen took him to the hospital and the doctors wanted him to stay the night to be sure all was on the up-and-up. We had plans to continue the trip, but opted to head home instead so that Alex could more quickly recover.
The kids and Jen on top of the Remarkables.
Jen on the Moke Lake Ride.