Contrasting our New Zealand experience, so far, with our year in Finland in 2006-07 (something we find ourselves doing a lot), Dunedin feels much closer to what we’re used to in Missoula. I'd even go further and say that our existence in North Carolina in 2002-03 feels further from our Missoula way-of-life than does our life here in Dunedin, though it is still early in the game.

In some ways, this is a disappointment, because, looking back, it was the significant differences between Finnish and American culture (language included) that made our year in Finland so stimulating and rewarding. On the other hand, the reason you visit New Zealand is for the place itself. Similar to Montana, New Zealand is a place that requires getting out of town and seeing things, where having a vehicle is a part of the lifestyle. Thus one of the first things we did when we got here was to start looking for a car.

After several days of searching, we found what seems like a good deal on a 1996 Toyota station wagon. We just got the car this past Saturday and have already been out on a few excursions. The first was to a short track (the NZ word for trail) up to a waterfall on Nicholls Creek on the outskirts of town. Then on
Sunday, we took a trip out to the Otago Peninsula and hiked to Victory Beach. And finally, on Monday, Jen and I hiked up Flagstaff Mountain. So far so good.

Driving on the left side of the road and on the right side of the car is definitely strange, but I'm already getting used to it. What's more difficult to deal with is the general beginner feeling that Jen and I both have as drivers, especially when entering a busy intersection with cars going every-which-way.

Ellie at Victory Beach with an awesome shell.