

THE TRAVEL ISSUE

SOUTHERN *Lady*

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GREAT SOUTHERN GETAWAYS



Jake and Melissa Epker love a challenge. Whether they're choosing a home for investment or a place to lay down their roots, the couple tends to gravitate toward diamonds in the rough. Their latest find—a 1921 Greek Revival in the heart of Mobile's historic Ashland Place district—is no exception. Though the home had extensive hurricane damage, they were undeterred by its condition. "The house had been empty for about seven years when it went on the market. It didn't have central heat and air, the plumbing was a mess, and the front porch was falling in," Melissa says. "We've always kind of enjoyed finding the ones that look the worst."

The Epkers looked beyond the damage and decay to see the stately columns and upstairs balcony with a great view of a beautiful neighborhood, and could envision their family of four thriving in its surrounds. Bringing that vision to reality, though, required months of planning and consultations. Melissa says it took a village to transform the dilapidated home into an elegant abode, including an architect, a kitchen/bathroom designer, and interior designer Trini Bryant, a family friend. The six-month process focused largely on transforming the original butler's pantry and galley kitchen into an eat-in kitchen, mudroom, and sunroom. "That's probably where I spend most of my time. The sunroom is a nice place to sit and visit with friends. And the kids do homework at the kitchen counter," Melissa says. Trini's personal knowledge of the family—from their morning routines and entertaining habits to their love for music and shades of blue—guided her to effective design decisions. Under her skillful hand, every room gained a purpose and every family member received a space for retreat and renewal. "The layout really works for us," Melissa says. "This is just an all-around great place to live."

