

Southern Living®

Warm Getaways

Uncrowded beaches,
charming towns,
and other reasons
to head south



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Idyll Time:
McKee
Botanical
Garden in
Vero Beach,
Florida

First-Home
Survival Guide

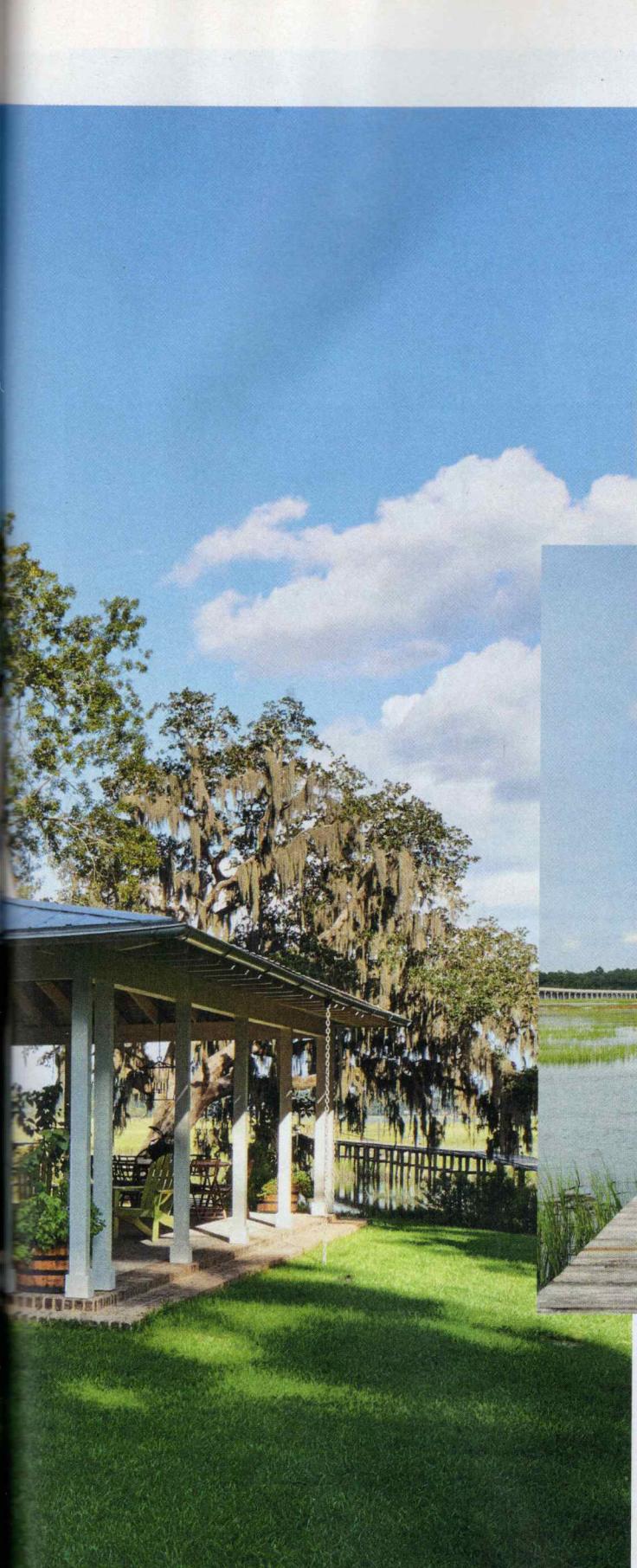
Deliciously Easy
Pineapple Desserts

Pretty, Colorful
Houseplants

Open for Visitors

While the exterior borrows from farmhouse traditions, homeowner Winslett Watson's vision for the low-slung silhouette of the brick-lined porch drew from the design of the May River Chapel in nearby Bluffton, South Carolina. There are two brick steps all the way around. "We wanted our home to feel accessible," she says.





Farmhouse On The Water

The Watson family
waited nine years
to build their
dream home
on Georgia's
Vernon River

Open for visitors
While the exterior is a traditional farmhouse tradition, Winslett Watson says

"We keep the outdoors a focal point even when we're inside," says Winslett. When you walk into the house, you can see straight through to the river.

For some families—especially those with two boys

and an adventurous, outdoorsy bent—squeezing into a two-bedroom house with a cramped kitchen (and a single bath!) is an experience to be endured for the briefest possible period. But for accessories designer Winslett Watson, her husband, Justin, and their two sons, Whit and Haddon, the nine years they spent in a fishing cottage (a 1930s number on a gorgeous waterfront parcel on the south side of Savannah) were the perfect testing ground to learn what they wanted in a forever home.

"Our time there taught us a lot of lessons—in organization, for one," Winslett jokes. "We also found that we don't want to live in a giant house, hibernating in our own separate spaces. We love being together."

So when the Watsons were ready to draft the plans for their dream home, finding the sweet spot between spreading out and staying close was key. The family enlisted a like-minded husband-and-wife architect team, Nathan and Liane Brock of Wiregrass Studio, to conceive a functional and reasonably sized home that prioritized togetherness and a sense of place over sprawling suites and spare rooms.

"In terms of space, our plan was all about quality over quantity," says Liane,



who guided the Watsons toward their 2,600-square-foot home. "We'd trim a few square feet in one spot to buy a window that would make the whole room feel larger, and we shifted the resources from underutilized areas to the big wraparound porch that's enjoyed every day."

The result is an airy, open space with elements borrowed from farmhouse styles and Lowcountry architecture alike—and it's packed with plenty of smart storage solutions to boot. See how this tight-knit family found their perfect home fit.



Aim High

To give the living and dining area an expansive feeling, the Brocks opened up the space with a vaulted ceiling and dormer windows. V-groove paneling reinforces the upward emphasis. A grid of poster-size prints (hung above the fireplace and the built-in television cabinet) also shows off the walls' height. "I love the scale of those prints," Winslett says.





Live Beyond the Walls

Justin's job as owner of the local Mosquito Authority means that the windows and doors stay open all the time, particularly in the kitchen. "We wanted it to be easily accessible to the porch for serving food and drinks," says Winslett. She created a pass-through station with an L-shaped bank of Marvin casement windows and soapstone countertops indoors and out.



Looking to highlight a view?
These dark window grilles
visually "disappear" to show
off the Vernon River better.





Level Up

The Watsons offset their wraparound wall of windows and doors with a bank of built-ins to handle the family's storage needs. The cleverly designed shelves display their extensive book collection along with sentimental keepsakes. A rolling library ladder delivers accessibility, some whimsy, and a sense of motion.

Raise the Bar

The family's full-service approach to entertaining extends beyond the kitchen. "Our friends know that right when they come over, we'll offer them a glass of wine or a cocktail," says Winslett, who had a pocket window installed between her wet bar and the wide-open living room for easy access. To heighten the space's visibility, it's painted a deep blue, Naval (SW 6244) by Sherwin-Williams, and the framed textiles are experiments from her own line of clothing and home goods, Lettees.



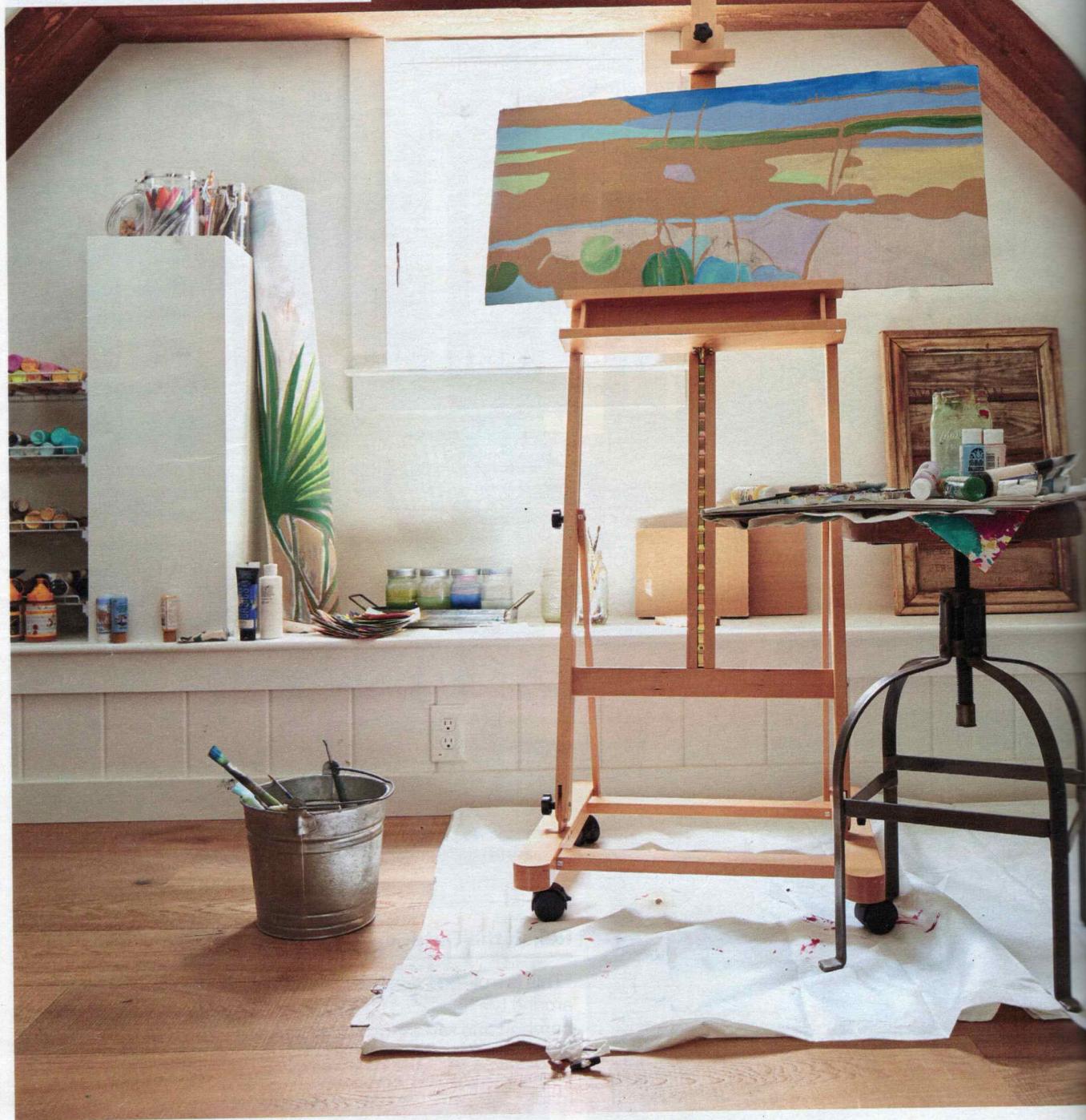


Relish the Outdoors

"This is truly our 'den,'" Winslett says. "We live here, especially around the fireplace." She outfitted the area with inviting pieces: bamboo and rattan furniture (inherited from her great-aunt and reupholstered with outdoor fabric) and an indestructible table (snagged for \$10 at a thrift sale). Justin and his uncle made the heart-pine mantel over the tabby-and-brick fireplace.

Stage a Studio Space

Initially, the area above the kitchen was meant to house a mechanical closet, but Winslett gave it a more fulfilling purpose—as a small place (8 by 16 feet) where she can paint. “Since you have to climb the library ladder to get up here, I don’t have a lot of visitors,” she says happily. **SL**





Winslett designed the boys' beds—space-saving superstars with built-in reading lights and pullout trundles.

The kitchen's outdoor counter comes in handy. "When the kids are wet from playing in the river, they can eat without dripping on things in the house," says Winslett.

