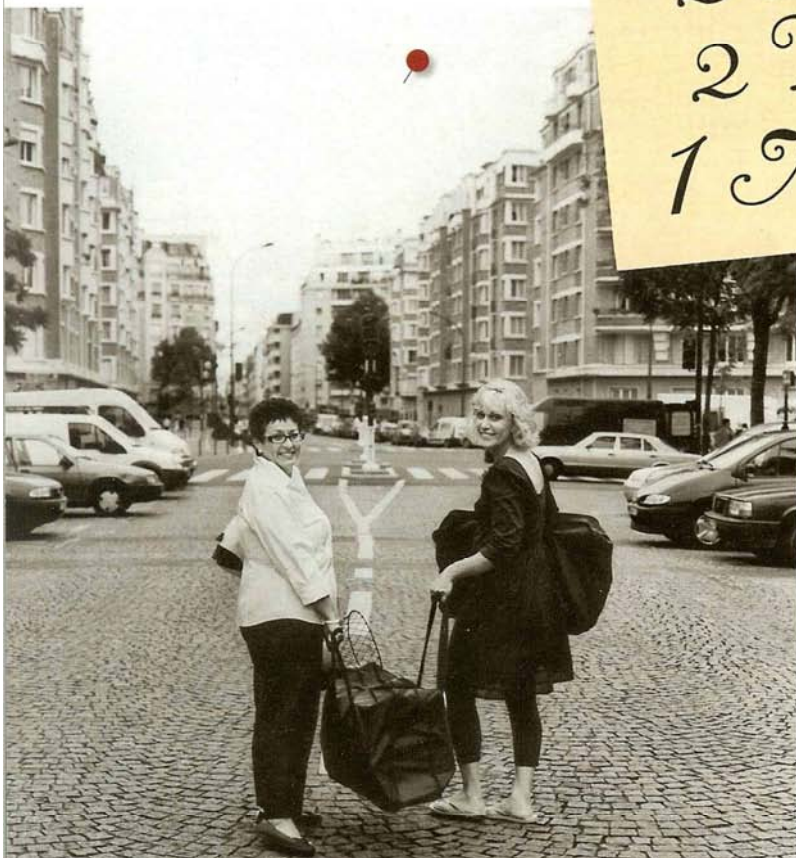


Best friends Cheryl Krecsy and Helga Noll turned a holiday in Paris into the unexpected adventure of owning and renovating a vacation retreat.

OUR ADVENTURE

2 Friends +
2 Weeks =
1 Makeover



THE BACKSTORY

Cheryl Krecsy, who owns a home store, Little White House, in British Columbia, and Helga Noll, a flight attendant, are great friends who go away together every New Year's with their husbands. This year the Nolls chose Paris.

JANUARY: After dinner their first night in Paris, Cheryl and Helga bring some real estate brochures back to the hotel for nighttime reading. They can barely sleep after realizing that they could actually afford to jointly buy a small apartment in Paris! All that remains is to convince their husbands.

APRIL: Helga, her husband, Andy (who speaks fluent French), and Cheryl arrive, scout neighborhoods, and find an apartment in Montmartre. The 150-year-old home, though shabby and painted purple and orange, has charming tall windows, authentic old beams, and looks out on a cobblestone courtyard. They extend their trip three days to complete all the paperwork, and—with just half an hour to spare—take photos and measurements so they can plan the redo back home in Canada!

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BEATRIZ DA COSTA
PRODUCED BY HEATHER CAMERON
WRITTEN BY JILL KIRCHNER SIMPSON

OPPOSITE, TOP AND MIDDLE: Helga (left) and Cheryl find all sorts of treasures at the Porte de Vanves flea market in Montparnasse. BOTTOM: The renovated kitchen. "It's typically French to have a small kitchen and dining area, because social life is lived in the cafés," says Cheryl. THIS PAGE: A dining nook is fashioned from a chair and table tucked between two windows. ALL FURNITURE: LITTLE WHITE HOUSE. FOR RESOURCES, SEE ADDRESS INDEX.

Get the look: ROMANCE TABLE AND SIDE CHAIR, LITTLE WHITE HOUSE.



WORK BEGINS

JULY: With less than two weeks to renovate and furnish the apartment on a budget of \$10,000, Cheryl designs a floor plan for the small (12- by 13-foot) studio and ships everything—furniture, paint, floor tiles, tools, and even a stepladder—ahead of time in a container.

AUGUST: The two couples arrive in Paris with 11 days to renovate. One problem: They didn't know Paris practically shuts down in August. Stores aren't open; tradespeople have left town. This tests their ingenuity.

CONTAINER CHECKLIST

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Iron daybed and mattress | ✓ |
| 2. Queen bed | ✓ |
| 3. Bedside cabinet | ✓ |
| 4. Armoire | ✓ |
| 5. Nesting tables | ✓ |
| 6. Pedestal table | ✓ |
| 7. Two side chairs | ✓ |
| 8. Vanity/desk | ✓ |
| 9. Coatrack | ✓ |
| 10. Iron garden table and chairs | ✓ |
| 11. Bed linens | ✓ |
| 12. Tiles, paint, tools, stepladder | ✓ |

AVANT



7



Sweat equity After ripping down a flimsy wall and a wardrobe closet on another wall, Cheryl (left) spends three days replastering the two walls, using plaster of Paris to mimic an old French technique.

Get the look: TRY SMOOTH PLASTER, FROM CAROMAL COLOURS; (717) 790-3190; CAROMALCOLOURS.COM.

“More than just renovating, it’s a story of friendship!”

DAYS 1 to 3: They tear down a wardrobe closet and also a decrepit wall, finding under the latter a stone wall buried beneath layers of plaster that cannot be easily chipped away. Cheryl resorts to plan B: replastering the two walls herself (opposite).

DAY 4: Removing the closet reveals concrete on the floor. Cheryl fills the space, then covers the entire floor with black vinyl tiles: “They make the furniture pop.”

DAY 5: Power tools don’t work here. Gene, Cheryl’s husband, and Andy must purchase new ones. They teach themselves how to repair French wiring and plumbing.

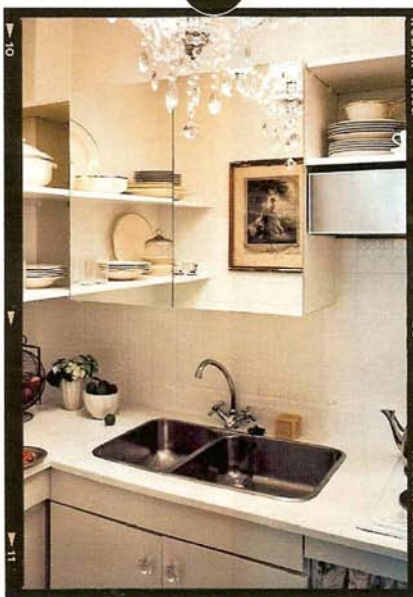
DAY 6: The orange laminate cabinets in the kitchen must go. Cheryl’s solution: melamine paint from The Home Depot. It turns everything sparkling white. Andy and Gene adhere mirrors to the front of one cabinet to open up the 5½- by 4½-foot space.



2



3



7. FURNITURE PLACEMENT

To make the most of every inch in this tiny, 200-square-foot studio apartment, Cheryl first carefully worked out a floor plan on paper. A versatile iron daybed provides seating as well as extra sleeping space. An armoire (not seen) provides clothes storage, since the closet wall (see “before” shot no. 1, opposite) was ripped out.

2. COLOR PALETTE

“Painting everything linen white kept the space feeling open, light, and easy on the eye,” says Cheryl. Dark stained beams and glossy black floors and baseboards add pleasing contrast. “The black paint hides imperfections well,” she notes. Romantic, tall casement windows bring a lot of natural light into the apartment.

3. KITCHEN RENOVATION

The friends knew they didn’t have enough time or money to change the cabinets, so Cheryl used melamine paint to camouflage the dated orange with timeless white. She used the paint to spruce up the tile backsplash as well. The chandelier is a reproduction fixture found in Paris.

FUN TOGETHER



DAY 7: The bathroom is not so bad: The gray marble tile can stay; so can the vintage tub. Painting the ceiling black—Onyx from Benjamin Moore—helps the room feel even taller. Later a repro chandelier is added for glamour.

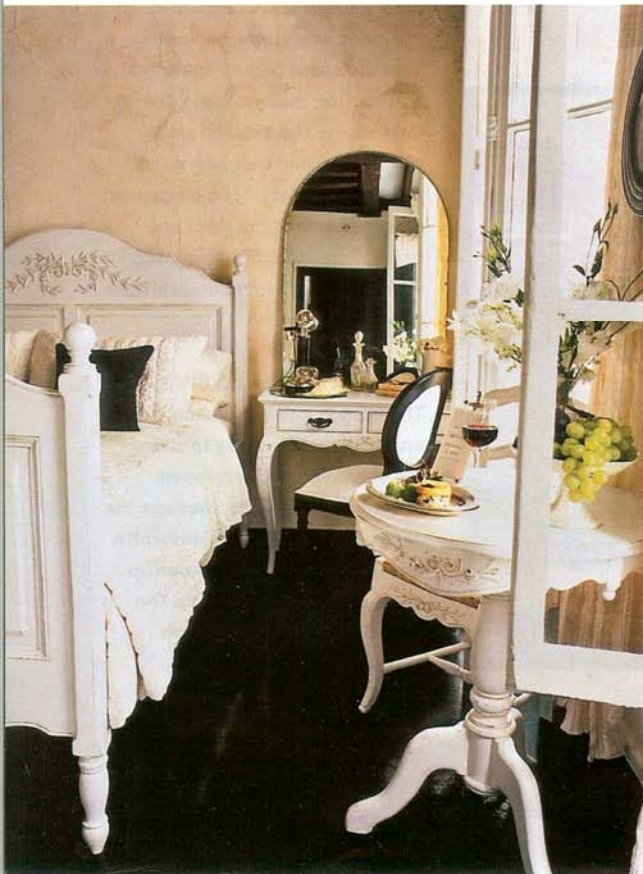
DAY 8: Painting is divvied up accordingly: Gene is the tallest so he stains the ceiling beams. Helga is finicky so she does the trim. Andy does most of the walls, painting them a creamy French linen shade—White Down from Benjamin Moore.

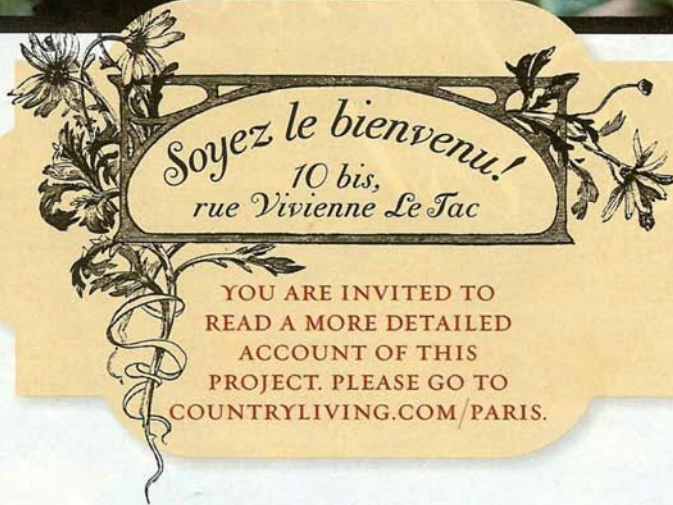
DAY 9: To dress up the plain kitchen door, Cheryl applies a lacy chair decal.

DAY 10: Most of the work is done! Leaving Gene and Andy to finish up, Helga and Cheryl hit the Paris flea markets for finishing touches with local character and scoop up a chandelier, Limoges dishes, and a picture for the kitchen.

Shopping Helga and Cheryl (above) examine potential finds at their favorite Parisian flea market, Porte de Vanves.

Space planning Cheryl put a dressing table next to the bed (below left); it doubles as a desk. A pedestal table with chairs offers dining à deux. A coatrack (below right) serves as "closet." Cheryl wanted a French door leading to the kitchen but opted for keeping what was there and dressing it up with a whimsical cutout chair instead (below right).





TIME TO CELEBRATE!

DAY II: At last, the celebration for a job beautifully done! Lisa, Helga and Andy's daughter (above, sharing a toast with Cheryl), travels from Vancouver to join them in the festivities. The women invite Gregory Berthout (right), their real estate agent *extraordinaire*, and their neighbors from the building to enjoy a wine and cheese party in their cobblestone courtyard. It has been a whirlwind and a lot of hard work, and it was definitely worth it, the (still) best friends agree. All in all, *c'est magnifique!* *fin*

