

JONESBORO, Tenn. -- Rosemary Kleske had spent hours online.

Some venues required her group to pay for their cooking services – a tough bill to swallow when her group of church ladies could certainly whip up a good meal on their own.

Other retreats restricted the use of alcohol, but Kleske was planning a wine tasting 101 session for the 40 women from the Holston Valley Unitary and Universalist Church (HVUUC).

Other venues also had lengthy, complicated contracts.

But the women's retreat was a simple weekend event, and they just wanted to have fun and relax.

“It was very hard to find someplace that fit all of our criteria,” she said.

Eventually, she found Sugar Hollow Retreat. Now she's planning her third women's retreat there for 2010.

“The beauty speaks for itself. It's just gorgeous and everyone loves the hikes,” she said.

Only an hour from her church's home in Jonesboro, Sugar Hollow's 10-bedroom Lodge gave them the freedom to do whatever they wanted.

The wine and cheese tasting went perfectly, as did the walks along the retreat's nine miles of hiking trails. In the evenings, they played board games available for use, or put on skits together. One afternoon they even had a high tea with dresses and hats.

Kleske said Sugar Hollow's privacy, ease and space were exactly what they needed.

“And it's not camping. It feeling more luxurious for a retreat,” she said.

There was no contract to sign, just a “leave it as you found it” agreement. Plus, the innkeeper was very accommodating, Kleske said, when they needed extra chairs and tables.

Her group is looking forward to their return next April, she said.

“They were so accommodating,” she said. “We just like it so much.”