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Private vehicle ban for Doi Suthep

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Private buses, cars and pickup trucks will be banned from driving up the mountainous road to Doi Suthep in Chiang Mai between Dec 28 and Jan 2 to relieve traffic congestion over the "seven dangerous days" of the New Year period when tens of thousands of tourists are expected to visit the place.

Tourists wanting to visit the famous Wat Phra That Doi Suthep and two other nearby tourist attractions on Doi Suthep - Bhubing Palace and Doi Pui Hmong Hilltribe Village - will be directed to park their vehicles at the Chiang Mai International Convention and Exhibition Centre and take public passenger vans and red song taew pickups to their destinations.

The fares would be cheaper than usual, said Chiang Mai police chief Pol Maj Gen Krich Kittilue.

Pol Maj Gen Krich said the ban was necessary because a study by provincial authorities had found 50,000 tourists visited Phra That Doi Suthep during the New Year holiday last year, rising to 100,000 on some days.

This caused heavy traffic jams on roads because the temple's car park could support only 500 vehicles.

The authorities will put on 500 song taews and 100 vans to handle the influx of tourists and the local public song taew and van association would be ready to increase services if needed. Vehicles will provide rotating services to ensure rapid traffic flow.

The ban is expected to reduce traffic problems in the area by 50 per cent. If the new traffic control measure proves successful, it will be introduced to other popular tourist destinations in the province such as Doi Ang Khang and Doi Inthanon.

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