

Perfume Pagoda readies for visitors

Thursday, 01 March 2007

Photo op: The first stop is Thien Tru Pagoda. — VNS Photo Truong Vi

The Huong Pagoda festival this year promises to reduce traffic jams for thousands of pilgrims and tourists thanks to measures adopted by the organising committee. The Huong (Perfume) Pagoda Festival, the biggest annual festival in Viet Nam this year will open on the 6th day of the Lunar New Year (22 February) and conclude at the end of the third lunar month (May 15) in My Duc District, Ha Tay Province. The opening ceremony of the festival will begin at 6am on 22 February at the Thien Tru Pagoda. According to Venerable Thich Minh Hien, in order to overcome traffic jams that beset the festival last year, certain infrastructure outside and inside the Huong Pagoda has been restored and repaired. This year, the pagoda invested around VND3 billion to enlarge the road from Yen Wharf to Thien Tru Pagoda to 10m, creating three-lane traffic, including one for the handicapped. The Hoi Xa Bridge was enlarged from 7m to 14m, and the road section in front of the Thien Tru yard to the station of the cable car number 1 was widened to 7m to reduce traffic jams. The Yen River sections to Tuyet Son and Thanh Son pagodas were dredged, and Huong Son Commune invested around VND3 billion to level the Duoi Voi lagoon (closed to Thien Tru wharf) as part of its efforts to move all restaurants and services on Thien Tru yard to Duoi Voi. The province also introduced 12 cable cars, bringing the total number of cable cars to 45 to help transportation. For the first time, festival organisers are introducing two separate fares on ferry boats for pilgrims and tourists. While tourists are to be charged VND22,500, pilgrims going to Huong Tich grotto will be charged VND20,000 on ferry boats this year. These fares are applicable to both domestic and international tourists. A guide book on Huong Pagoda in English and Vietnamese was recently published to provide necessary information for visitors. The organising committee is expecting 40,000 tourists from all parts of the country and abroad to participate in the Huong Pagoda Festival, one of the most important pilgrimages in the north, this year. "With our preparations, we hope pilgrims from all over the nation can participate in one of the most sacred Buddhist festivals, set in a scenic landscape, which has inspired artists through generations," said Le Van Sang, a member of the organising committee. — VNS