

# Skyview by Empyrean Certified As India's First Sustainable Tourism Destination

---

March 03, 2022

Skyview By Empyrean in Patnitop, Jammu and Kashmir, has been certified as India's first Sustainable Tourism Destination by The Responsible Tourism Society of India [RTSOI], the national body of Responsible Tourism that promotes sustainable responsible tourism practices within the tourism industry. It was also conferred as "Champion" -a status which is accorded for a score of 90 plus for following sustainable eco-friendly tourism practices.

The Sustainable Tourism Destination certification is given exclusively to those who have successfully met the Sustainable Tourism Criteria of India set for travel destinations. This means that Skyview by Empyrean is compliant with the parameters of Sustainable & Responsible Tourism as practiced by RTSOI and set as a standard by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (GoI). These include sustainability management, socio-economic sustainability, cultural sustainability and environmental sustainability.

The destination is about 100 kilometres from Jammu airport. Patnitop is a small hilltop town in the Udhampur district of Jammu. Set atop a charming plateau in the Shivalik belt, it rests at an altitude of 2,024 metres. As per folklore, Patnitop is a distortion of 'Patan Da Talab', which loosely translates to 'Pond of the Princess'.

Visitors can experience a gondola ride, an array of F&B offerings, luxury stays, shopping as well as a host of soft adventure activities, many introduced for the first time in India, such as the magic carpet, an all-season dry tubing sledge, Asia's longest zigzag zipline at 580 metres, curated biking excursions, hiking and supervised treks.

A subsidiary of FIL Industries Limited, Empyrean is focussed on the development of mountain tourism, adventure activities and public infrastructure. Touted as the largest tourism project in Jammu and Kashmir, Skyview Patnitop is credited with setting up India's highest ropeway. It's a two-hour drive from Jammu, passing through four spectacular tunnels, and is just three kilometres away from the Chenani Nashri tunnel.

Located just a 90-minute drive from the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Katra, and spread over 22 acres, Skyview commenced operations three years ago with

the successful launch of the Skyview Gondola - India's highest [in terms of ground clearance] international class sustainable ropeway, which brought the quaint hill-resort of Patnitop into the tourism limelight. It was the first step towards sustainability as it eliminated a 30-45 minutes/ 26 km road journey to just 10-12 minutes, thereby reducing dependence on fossil fuel, encouraging travellers to reduce carbon footprint and enjoy a shorter and cleaner getaway to Patnitop. It is the first gondola in Asia where not a single tree was felled along the gondola line whilst constructing the project, making it an environmentally friendly construction.

Besides the gondola itself, everything at the property, right from responsible sourcing of materials to incorporating local traditions and styles in construction to utilising local craftsmen, to landscaping with native flora and fauna to architectural design promoting rainwater harvesting for recycle and reuse thereby reducing the load on natural resources and groundwater to the use of biodegradable cutlery and digitised menus; sustainability has been at the heart of the project.

Added to this are the efforts placed towards community development in sync with sustainable mobility supporting regional economic growth, as well as the development of safe, livable, and attractive places for all making for collective economic development. Here, the ropeway has contributed to infrastructure thereby benefiting the local community- by providing locals employment during construction and now at the site; sourcing of fresh produce from nearby villages allows for economic benefit to local farmers and saving of food miles; and last but not the least -making Patnitop a more attractive tourist destination thus benefiting travel ancillary business - hotels, restaurants, guides and local transporters.

Commenting on the certification, Syed Junaid Altaf, Managing Director, Empyrean Skyview Projects Private Limited said, "With mankind being faced with numerous environmental challenges, promoting sustainable development and tourism is the right way forward. Over the next three years we are looking at close to 700,000 passengers on the gondola itself which will help in reducing carbon footprint as more people will use this as a mode of transportation instead of driving up by road. Community development is an integral part of our future plans; it dovetails with sustainable mobility that effectively supports regional economic growth, as well as the development of safe, livable, and attractive places for all. We are also working on building a sustainable and holistic hospitality brand with differentiated offerings, global partnerships and a unique experience for every guest."

Speaking on awarding the RTSOI certification, Rakesh Mathur, Founding Member & Hon. President, RTSOI, said, "It is a matter of great pride that the first

ever Ecotourism destination to be certified by RTSOI has emerged a “Champion” practitioner of sustainability. Skyview by Empyrean, nestled in the picturesque Sanget Valley near Jammu, is also the first ever Ecotourism Destination to provide a cable car experience to Patnitop, apart from games and entertainment for all ages, global cuisine and excellent luxury accommodation."

\*\*\*