

How Ropeways Offer A Sustainable Mode of Travel: Syed Junaid Altaf

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As the post-COVID world becomes increasingly conscious of the environmental impact, the need for sustainable travel options has become more important than ever before. While planes, trains, and automobiles have been the preferred mode of travel for decades, the fossil fuels used

by them have added considerably to the carbon footprint. As more people look at alternative, eco-friendly modes of travel to reduce carbon emissions, ropeways are slowly gaining traction in India and across the globe.

India's diverse geographical terrain makes room for the development of efficient and ecofriendly transport solutions that shorten distances, especially in the mountains.

Ropeways play a crucial role in cutting down time, distance and pollution while allowing passengers to get a bird's eye view of some of the most scenic landscapes of our country.

With the government having recently announced eight ropeway projects worth Rs. 4,000 crores under the Parvatmala Scheme, the focus in India has further shifted on ropeways becoming an integral part of India's domestic and international travel and tourism sectors. The Indian ropeway industry has come a long way since the first ropeway was launched in Darjeeling in 1968. Today, more than 70 operational ropeways run across the country. This growth, however, has not come without its set of challenges. Balancing sustainability with development has been the most significant one for developers. Meeting development goals without harming the environment, society, or the economy of the region where the ropeway is being built can be difficult, but there are infrastructure firms in

India that are dedicated to preserving the environment and boosting the local economy.

Here is why ropeways are the way forward:

- They use clean energy and promote sustainable travel.
- Ropeways don't rely on fossil fuels therefore they have a low carbon footprint.
- They run on electric energy making them a much cleaner, greener travel option.
- They cause less damage to the environment than the fossil fuels used by cars, planes and trains. With climate change becoming an ever-increasing cause of concern, building more ropeways is the best solution for a net-zero carbon imprint.

Last Mile Connectivity

India has a diverse topography that covers the mountain ranges of the Himalayas, coastal plains, plateaus and cities. While the urban regions are well connected, building roads or a rail track in the mountains can be hazardous to the local environment. The mountains need to be dug out or blasted to pave a path, damaging the flora and fauna specific to the region. Ropeways can connect the highest point of any mountain peak to the world below without considerably altering the landscape and ensure that the beauty of the hills remains untouched.

Cut Down Travel Time

Journeys on the mountains take much longer than on the plains because every hair-pin bend and meandering curve needs to be maneuvered carefully and slowly. Ropeways cut down that time drastically. For those who get car sick in the hills, ropeways are a lifesaver! You get to enjoy the beauty with an aerial view and you get to visit some of the highest peaks. One example is the Skyview by Emyrean ropeway in Patnitop that covers 2.8 km between Sanget and Patnitop in flat 10 minutes! It reduces the distance by 3/3 20KM, saving about 45 minutes of driving time and traffic in the hilly terrain of Jammu. During the construction of this all-weather, net-zero ropeway, not a single tree was damaged or cut while putting in place the infrastructure.

Boost Local Economy

Finally, ropeways are long-term projects that often take years from start to finish. Once a mobility infrastructure company attains permissions to set up a ropeway in a particular region, the face of the local economy begins to evolve. Employment opportunities are created be it in construction, operation or maintenance of the ropeway project. The larger the workforce engaged, the more families benefit from that one project. Moreover, an increase in tourism that comes when the ropeway is functional provides further opportunities for local businesses to flourish and thrive. A ripple effect is created that leads to sustained economic growth of the region.

The Skyview Gondola project is one of the biggest tourism investments in the region of Jammu and Kashmir under the PPP Model (Public Private Partnership). As someone who has a deep emotional connect with Jammu and Kashmir having grown up here, I've always been driven by two critical factors — sustainability and development — when I take forward any endeavor to advance and grow the region. Be it tourism, transport, or infrastructure, we take our social, economic, and environmental responsibility very seriously and the proof of that is in what we call our 'Green Gondola'. More than 8,000 trees were planted along the gondola pathways and at both the terminals. This accomplishment set a benchmark for other ropeway projects in India and around the world. The entire infrastructure, including the towers, ropes, and cabins have been imported from France through our technology partner POMA – the world's leading brand in gondola transportation.

As the world continues to grapple with climate change and the need for effective sustainable solutions, it is time we explore ropeways as a promising alternative that benefits both the environment and local communities.
