

Ropeways

Ropeways are a type of transportation with cabins, buckets, or open chairs suspended above the ground from one or more cables (ropes), usually supported by a series of towers and moved using a motor at one end. If that definition feels a little generic, it's because there's a ton of variations we're about to get into!

Types of Ropeway:

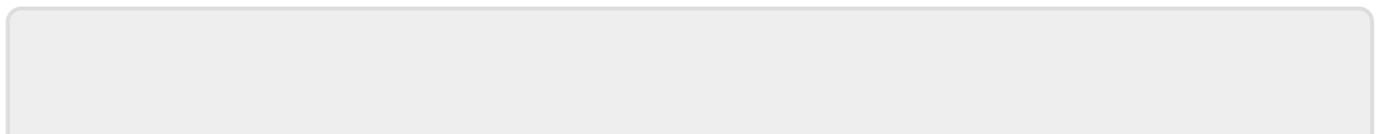
One of the first big distinctions is whether the system has multiple small cabins hanging from a moving cable, or a single bigger car moving along a fixed cable. The naming system is all over the place on these but these general categories should help.

- Aerial tramways or cable cars generally have one large car suspended from one or two stationary cables (track cables) for support while a separate moving cable provides propulsion. An electric motor at one end of the route drives the haulage rope which provides propulsion. Some systems have two cars on separate track cables connected by their haulage rope, so they can use the weight of the descending car to help lift the ascending one. This is more popular with steeper runs.
 - Advantages: A single cabin can transport up to 200 people. They seem to be good for crossing a longer single span and may not need any support towers.
 - Disadvantages: Aerial tramways usually provide lower line capacities and longer wait times than gondola lifts
- Gondola Lift: These ropeways have multiple small cabins attached to a continuously circulating, moving cable that is strung between two or more stations, over intermediate supporting towers. The gondola cabins often have detachable grips, enabling them to slow down in the stations to make boarding easier/safer. It is often considered a continuous system since it features a haul rope which continuously moves and circulates around two terminal stations. In contrast, an aerial tramway operates solely with fixed grips and simply shuttles back and forth between two end terminals. Gondola lifts can have intermediate stops.
 - Advantages: continuous operation, you always know when the next car is arriving. Shorter wait times.
 - Disadvantages: lower capacity per car.

If you want to really dive into all the variations of these systems, [the wikipedia article on aerial lifts is far more detailed than I'm willing to go](#).

Why Ropeways

Ropeways have been used for both passenger service and freight for decades, and can make a lot of sense in the right context. Many cities use them



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Last update: **2026/04/08 20:40**

