

Which flying camera is for me? The new Mavic Air 2 or Mavic Pro?

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It's very rare to see any travel video or brochure these days that doesn't have an image shot from overhead, on a drone.

Life seems more dramatic up from above, right? The units themselves have gotten way easier to use, more affordable and the camera quality is pretty amazing.

Imagine being able to throw a high-quality camera in the air that can get stunning overhead shots, smooth video even in wind and always somehow return home to sender.

It's one of the major tech advancements of our time, but it can be a little confusing.

DJI, which dominates drone sales, has a lineup of drones that starts at \$399 and goes up to \$1,599 for the Mavic line.

So naturally, with the latest new DJI drone shipping Monday, the Mavic Air 2, for \$799, I've been getting a lot of questions from readers and listeners: "Which one is right for me?"

Additionally, in announcing the Mavic Air 2, DJI said it was "the best all-around drone we've ever made."

That got my "oh yeah?" radar going. Really? Let's see.

The short answer: yes, I agree with DJI.

For most folks just getting their feet wet in droneography, the obvious choice is the Mavic Mini, which was released in late 2019. It sells for \$399, is cute and compact and easy to tote.

The Mini has lower resolution and the battery won't last as long. The Air 2 has a higher-grade camera that can shoot in 4K versus 2.7K) on a larger image sensor (1/2 inch versus 1/2.3) and the ability to shoot in 60 frames per second.

That basically means you'll get a steadier, smoother image for your video. And when you're flying in the air through wind, that's a big deal.

The more expensive Mavic Air Pro (\$1,349 and \$1,599) has even higher resolution and more pro tools to tweak the cameras with manual settings.

But DJI is right. The cheaper, \$799 drone is better than the more expensive models, even with specs that don't match up.

The company has really advanced the art of what it can do with these things.

I have owned a Mavic Pro since 2016. What has DJI learned in a few years? With the Air 2, how to make a less temperamental drone, one with image quality that tops my old Pro, in a smaller body with a way improved controller.

Drones are operated by connecting your smartphone to a separate controller, which brings the unit into the air via an app. The new controller is a huge, huge improvement over previous models, which blocked some parts of the smartphone in the chassis, and made it hard to open the required app.

With the new one, it's clear sailing.

My little drone has accompanied me all over the world—to Japan, Canada, Spain, Europe and Hawaii. It's gone up and down the California coast, the Nevada desert and remote spots in Washington state and Oregon.

But too many times, after I charged the drone and controller, cleared the memory card and took it to fly, it would be grounded due to various error messages that were impossible to figure out.

In a nutshell, the gimbal, which steadies the action in the air while flying, would get "overloaded," and it clearly was very sensitive to being thrown

in the back of a backpack.

So count me a fan of the Mavic Air 2, which on several flights this week never acted up. Except when I was flying (this was a surprise) in a no-fly zone.

The basic rule is that you can't fly within 5 miles of an airport. I was 7.1 miles, to be exact, and the Air 2 took off over a marina and docked boats until I got a new kind of error message—I was in a geofenced zone I shouldn't be in, so the drone announced that it would land automatically within 8 seconds.

As it was over water at the time, it took a little considerable skill to get it back on land immediately.

The problem for consumers is despite apps that can alert us (most notably B4UFLY) we generally don't know ahead of time whether it's cool to fly in an area or not. That is, unless there's some signage out to tell us, which more and more communities are doing, like in Laguna Beach and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

So DJI's nanny software is probably a good thing—as long as you're not flying over water and don't have to watch your [drone](#) suddenly land in the drink.

Because then, you'd be watching \$799 go right down the drain.

In other tech news this week

Smartwatch sales continued to climb during the start of the coronavirus crisis with Apple selling more than three times as many devices as its competitors, according to a new report by research firm Strategy Analytics. The firm said Apple holds a 55% market share in the

smartwatch category followed by Samsung with about 14%. Garmin rose to the third position with 8% of smartwatch sales. Overall shipments grew 20% over last year, reaching 13.7 million units sold in the first quarter of 2020, the report said.

National Password Day came and went. Did you change your password for every website you go to? If not, follow our simple tips here.

YouTube TV finally added some key cable channels that have been missing since its launch in 20XX. Namely, MTV, VH1, Nickelodeon and Comedy Central, per a new deal with Viacom, which owns the channels. YouTube TV is aimed at cord cutters, who pay \$49.99 monthly for a channel lineup that's smaller than cable, but also cheaper.

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