



Let's Get Started

FIVE BRUTALLY HONEST TIPS TO ACHIEVE DRONE PHOTOGRAPHY SUCCESS (ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY)

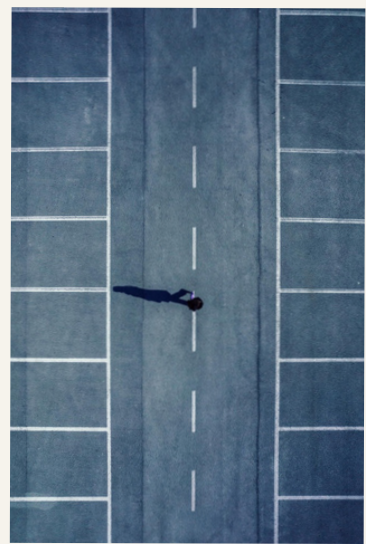
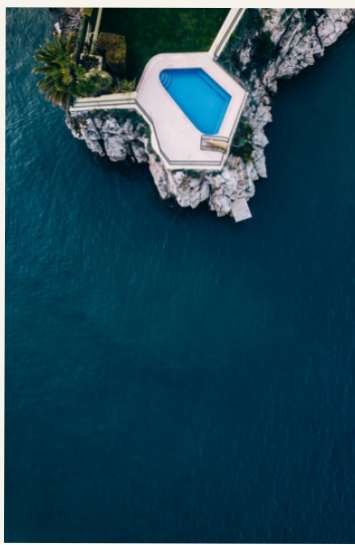
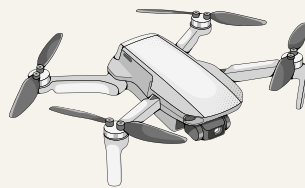
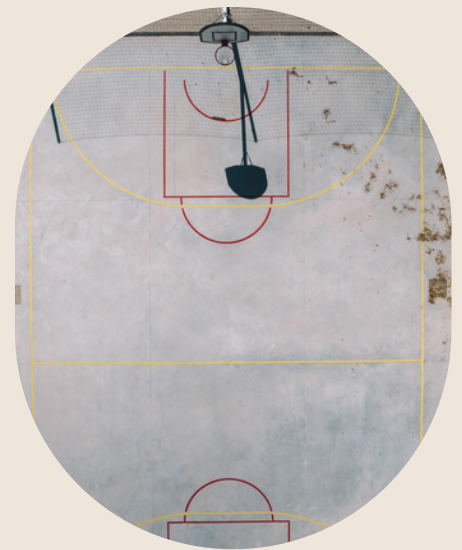


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DEAR CREATIVE PERSON,

I'm excited that you've downloaded a copy of this Brutally Honest Tips to Achieve Drone Photography Success (One Year Anniversary). Now a little about me.

Having invested on a DJI Mavic Air 2s in early-April 2022 (almost a year ago), to date I have accumulated just under 60 hours of total flight time. Many of these aerial photos go to [Arcangel Images](#) for potential book covers - my portfolio there consists of 2,300 exclusive Rights-Managed images. Other aerial drone images go to various stock agencies, including [Robert Harding](#).

I write regularly about my stock licensing experiences in my [Brutally Honest Stock Blog](#).

After reading and hopefully re-reading this guide many times (so the info sticks), if you feel that the information has been useful to your own business, I kindly ask you to buy me a cup of coffee as a token of your appreciation. Also, I would love to hear from you so do get in touch, I would be happy to answer any questions, or if have suggestions or just to say hello! Safe flying!

- Alex

Disclaimer: This is a 100% independent guide and I have in no way been instructed by any agency to draft this or have I received any remuneration for its creation and subsequent publication



TIP 1: INVESTING IN THE RIGHT GEAR

- Investing in a quality drone shouldn't be difficult nor prohibitively expensive. The rule of thumb is that if you want to shoot for stock you'll want to invest in a drone that has close to a 1-inch sensor or above, which certainly limits your options (in a good way). Smaller sensors, unless under ideal conditions, will produce images that will likely receive noise and/or focus rejections at most stock agencies.
- If you're completely new to flying, a suitable entry-level drone would be a DJI Mini3, which weighs in at just 249 grams (and more liberal rules). Once you gain more experience you may wish to upgrade to a heavier DJI Mavic Air2s or more recent Air3. These tend to handle windier days better and provide better battery life.
- Useful tip is to purchase used drones as pilots are constantly upgrading, just make sure that you do your due-diligence as you certainly don't want to purchase a drone that has crashed many times. You also won't be eligible for DJI Care.



TIP 2: FOLLOWING THE RULES

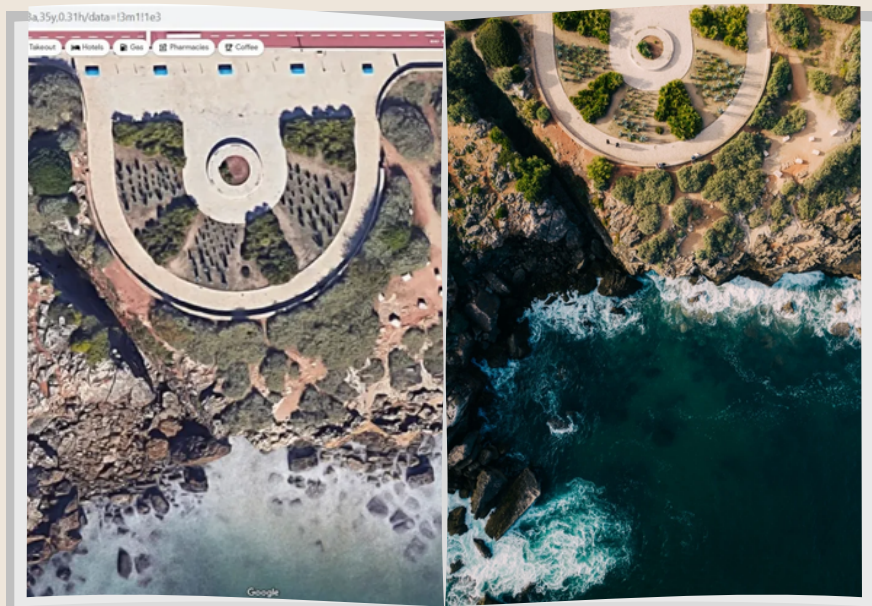
- Right after unboxing your brand new drone it can be extremely tempting to just get it up and start flying, but you must resist that temptations and learn the rules and get licensed where you live, especially if you plan on flying in built-up areas. That is to avoid any legal issues you may encounter if you have an incident.
- Getting licensed ultimately depends on where you live, so check your local aviation regulatory body. In the US, you'll need to get licensed via the FAA and undertake the Part 107 exams.
- In the European Union, administration will take place within your member state, although the aviation regulatory body is European, namely the European Union Aviation Safety Agency.
- Under EU rules, there are three Open categories, namely A1-A2-A3 where you'll need to take online exams - [more information in this link](#)



TIP 3: SHOTS THAT DO SELL - PART I

Before we get into the shots themselves, let's talk about the technical boring yet crucial settings. Before even taking your first drone image, ensure that:

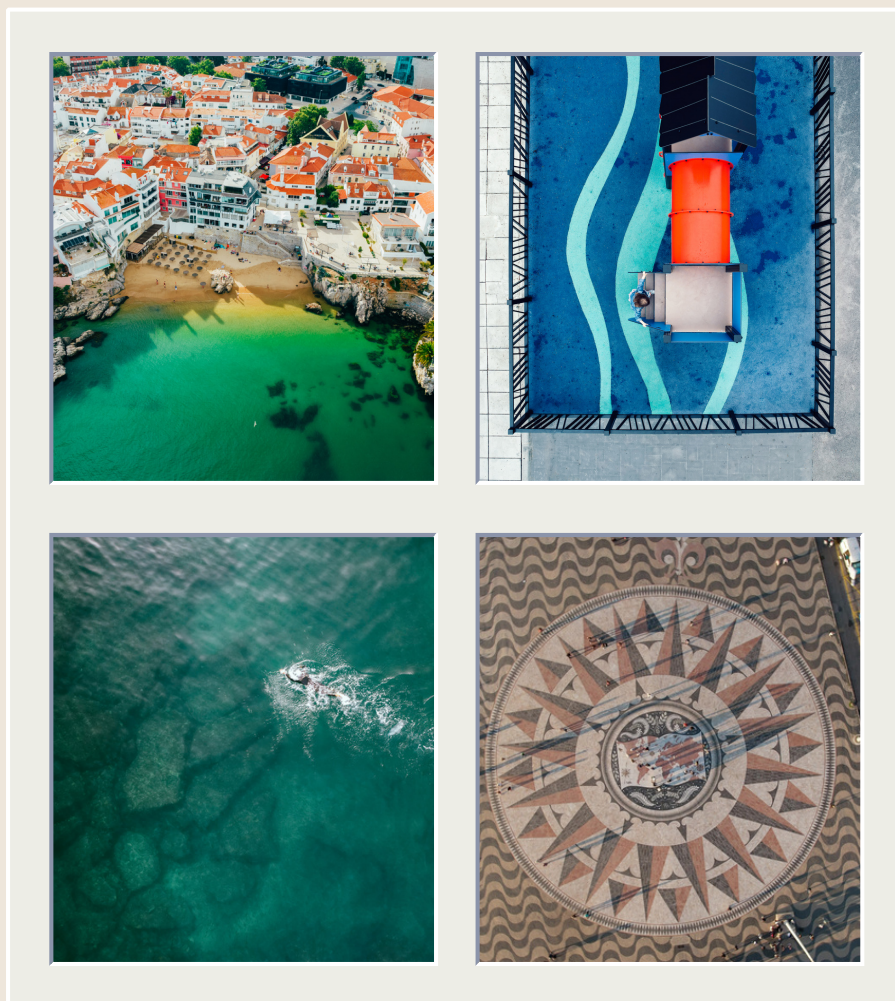
- You're shooting in RAW format, also known as DNG (Digital Negative). You'll just capture more detail than the compressed JPEGs and be able to post-process it more easily.
- Just like a normal DSLR, try to shoot as much as possible in the lowest ISO setting of 100 to ensure minimal noise.
- Fixed White Balance, which would make it easier/faster to post-process larger batches.
- You may also try auto-bracketing, which is to take three different exposures of the same image and then selecting the best one in post-processing...or combining them for a more detailed HDR-look.
- Bonus Tip: Use [Google Maps](#) to scout locations before-hand to save time when flying - [blog post on just this here.](#) See below, Google Maps (left) and actual drone top-down shot (right):



TIP 3: SHOTS THAT DO SELL - PART II

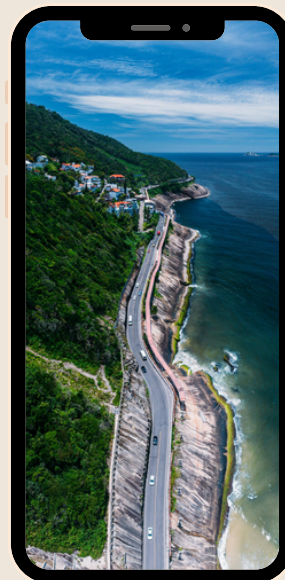
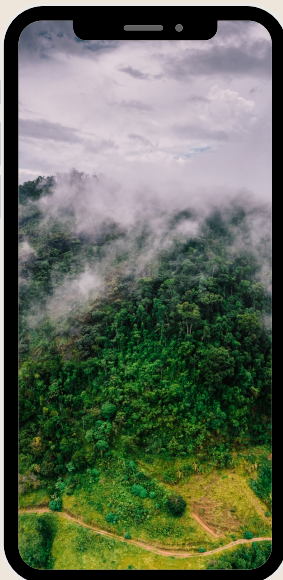
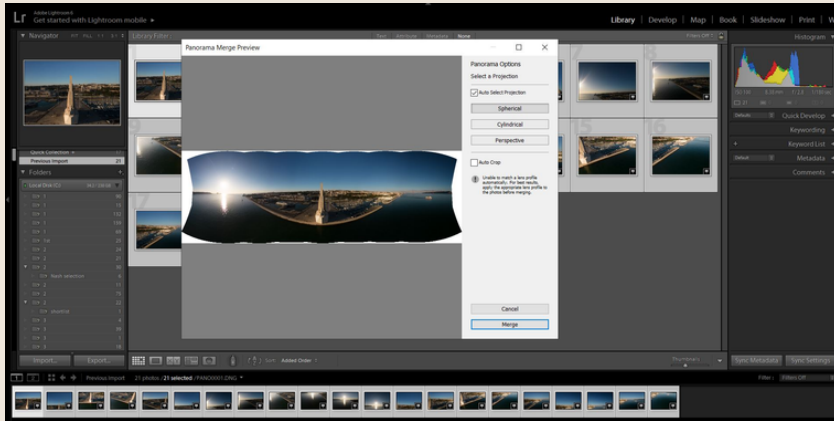
Now that we got the more boring stuff out of the way, we can get to the exciting part of actually flying/shooting! So, which are some of the most popular shots?

- On your first few flights your immediate temptation will likely to be to take it up as high as you can (hopefully not going above 120metres) and capturing some images from there.
- Although, such images do have a purpose to show the wide cityscape/landscape, your best-looking and ultimately most commercial shots are likely to be from just 20-30 metres up (or even lower, if possible) and you'll be able to see more details. Of course, shooting from lower to the ground does carry more risks, especially in urban settings, so do be careful.



TIP 3: SHOTS THAT DO SELL - PART III

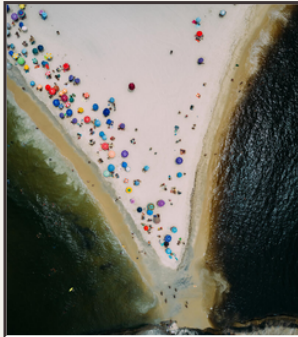
Another cool feature of the modern drone is its ability to capture multiple shots and stitch them together for a panorama - either vertical (3 images) or horizontal (21 images). These combine for a huge high-resolution file which as horizontals can up 100MB+ and can be great wall-hangers.



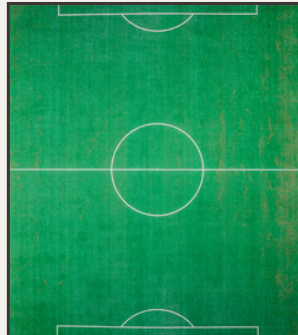
TIP 3: SHOTS THAT DO SELL - PART IV

The next tip is about creating commercially and visually interesting compositions, be them top-down (close to 90 degree angle) or standard shooting into the horizon. Try to incorporate one or more of these elements:

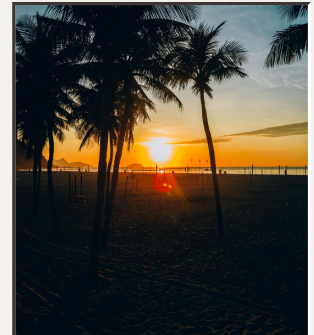
Look for interesting lines / patterns / shapes



Look for symmetry (grid-lines help)

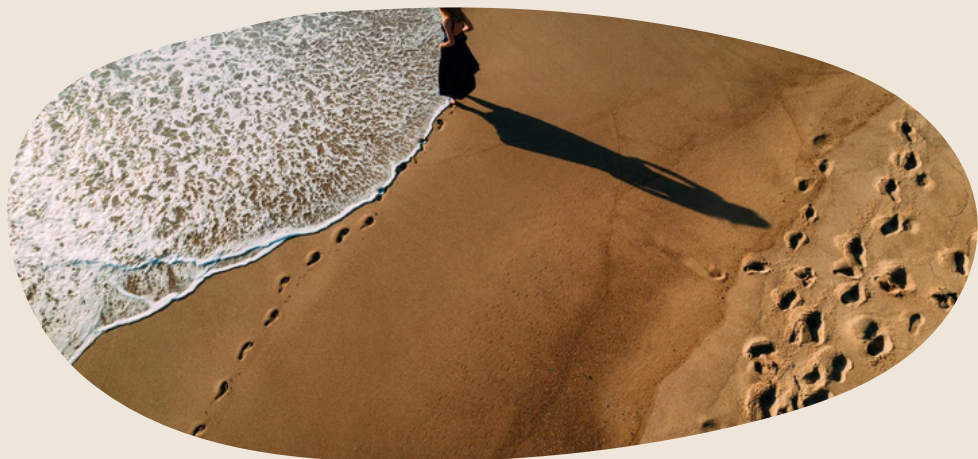
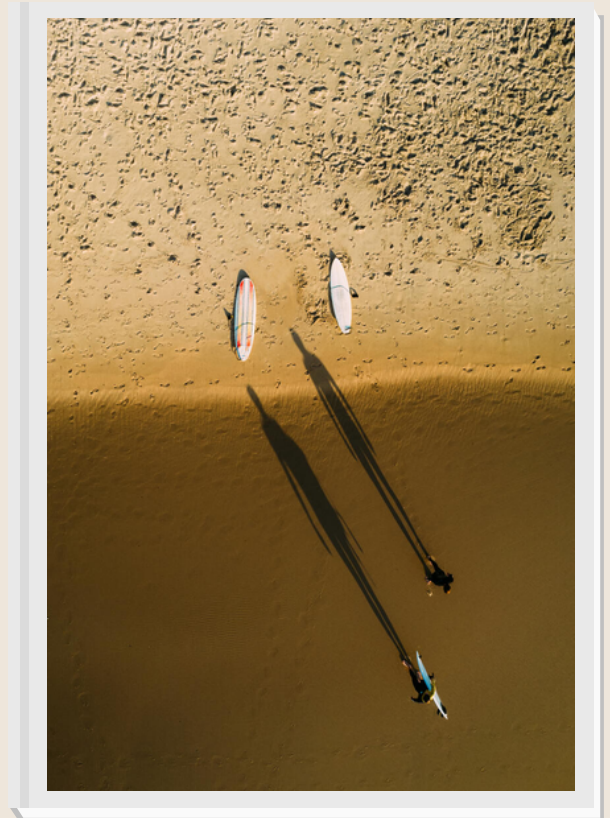
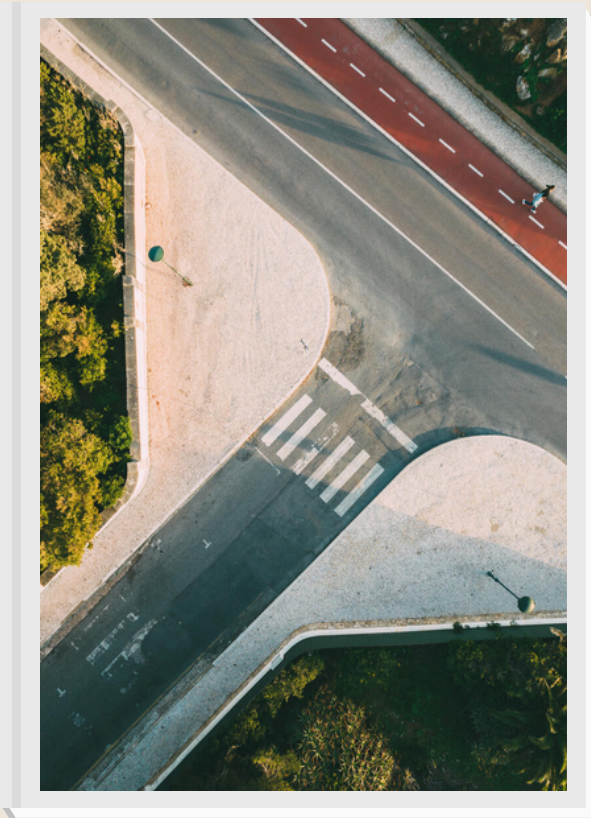


Look to include interesting elements on foreground which add depth



TIP 3: SHOTS THAT DO SELL - PART V

The last (but certainly not least) tip in this series is to shoot at golden-hour, either at sunrise or sunset. The main reason is that you'll be able to capture some beautiful long shadows, such as the following when shooting at an angle all the way to 90-degrees top-down:



TIP 4: WHICH AGENCIES TO UPLOAD

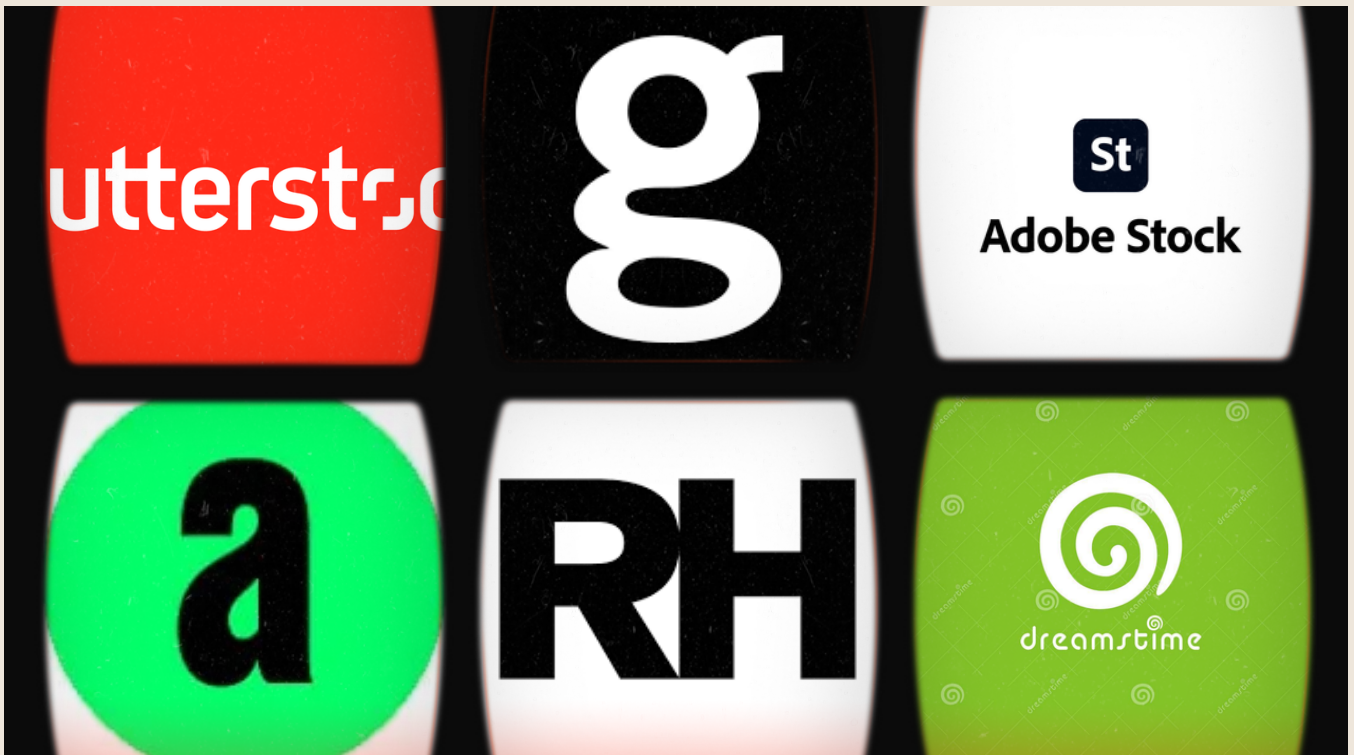
Once you've captured such images and hopefully they look pretty good and are of in-demand places, the next step is to upload to stock agencies. Which ones would you consider to have the best chance of multiple high-value sales?

Where to upload really depends on the types of content you've captured. As you probably already know by now, my top-down aerials that lend themselves for potential book covers will all go to Arcangel Images on an exclusive basis.

The rest can really go to most agencies, with the most popular with buyers being the usual suspects: Shutterstock, Adobe Stock, Alamy, Getty/iStock, etc. For the best chance of success ensure that they're keyworded to a high standard.

The downside of these agencies listed above is that, most likely, your images will be licensed for subscriptions at quite low prices and unfortunately getting lower every year. The good news is that drone photography is still relatively recent and there isn't so much on offer (yet), so do take advantage of this gap in the market.

You may also look to upload to [Robert Harding](#) where you may be able to receive greater royalties outside of the subscription world.





TIP 5: GET SOME DRONE JOBS NOW!

As mentioned in the previous page, drone photography is quite new and some of the views that we can now get only 15 years ago were reserved to photographers who could afford to invest on leasing a helicopter. That costs something like \$2 a minute!

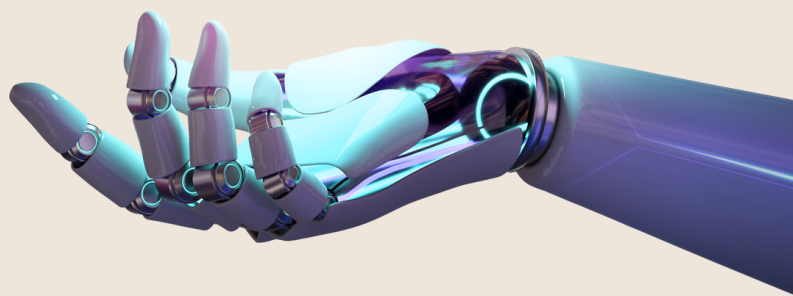
So drone photography (and videography) have opened up a whole new world of opportunities. This short guide has mentioned stock photography as an avenue to some income but honestly that's probably one of the least attractive financially, unless you have honed in on a specific niche, because royalties are dropping like drones attacked by predatory birds.

Therefore, your best bet is, once you have gained some experience and have all the proper licensing, to seek out drone jobs NOW. Most of these will pay in a day's work what you would earn in a month from the subscription-based stock agencies.

Here are five jobs that may help you start on your journey brought by Chat GPT - thanks AI, maybe one day you'll also fly my drone for me while I sleep:

Here's the requested table with columns and headers:

Service	Description	In-Demand For
Aerial Photography	Aerial photography involves taking photographs from a bird's eye view using a professional drone. Professional drone operators can capture stunning, high-resolution images that showcase properties and landscapes in a unique and visually appealing way.	Real estate marketing, landscape photography, and event coverage
Surveying and Mapping	Professional drones equipped with specialized sensors and software can be used for surveying and mapping purposes. This includes creating 3D maps, measuring terrain elevations, and tracking changes in land and waterways. Surveying and mapping with drones is in demand because it is faster, more accurate, and more cost-effective than traditional surveying methods.	Construction, agriculture, land development, and environmental monitoring
Search and Rescue	Drones equipped with thermal imaging cameras and other sensors can be used for search and rescue operations. These drones can cover large areas quickly and can detect heat signatures from individuals who may be lost or injured. Search and rescue missions with drones are in demand because they can help save lives and provide critical support to emergency responders.	Emergency response and public safety
Inspection	Drones equipped with high-resolution cameras and sensors can be used to inspect a variety of structures, including infrastructure, wind turbines, and buildings. Inspection with drones is in demand because it is safer and more cost-effective than traditional inspection methods, which often involve putting workers at risk.	Infrastructure, energy, and construction industries
Film and Television Production	Drones equipped with high-quality cameras and stabilization systems can be used to capture aerial footage for film and television production. Aerial footage can add a cinematic and visually striking element to productions, and can be used to capture hard-to-reach shots that were previously impossible. Aerial footage with drones is in demand because it adds production value and can be used to create stunning visual effects.	Film and television production



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

So cool that you've made it this far and thanks for reading and helping to celebrate my one-year drone anniversary. There will certainly be many more to come!

Hope I've convinced you to invest in a drone and even if you already have a drone perhaps you learned a thing or five.

.Again, if you've found this information useful please show your appreciation and buy me a coffee :-)

In addition, I would love to hear from you, so drop me a line:

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and/or visit my blog:

brutallyhonestmicrostock.com

