DJI’s $199 Neo selfie drone is going to be everywhere

The HoverAir X1 may have popularized easy-to-use selfie drones, but it’s DJI’s new $199 Neo we’ve been testing that looks set to dominate sales. It’s launching globally today and does almost everything the $350 X1 can do and so much more.

Like the X1, DJI’s new Neo is a drone you primarily buy to record yourself doing things for social media. It flies itself, no controller necessary — you simply push a button on the drone to cycle through a list of predefined flights like follow, hover in place, orbit overhead, and zoom in and out. It launches in seconds, begins recording, and then returns to land in the palm of your hand without requiring previous flying experience.

The Neo can and will crash if you fly it near obstacles, but like the X1, its flexible frame can survive a beating.

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a:hover]:text-black [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-e9 dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray-63 [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-13 dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63″>*The Neo still fits easily into running shorts.*

One major shortcoming of the Neo for use as a selfie drone is its lack of portrait video mode. When asked why the feature

was omitted, DJI’s European spokesperson Matt Bailey said that the company “will consider user feedback on this.” Weird.

DJI’s Neo does, however, shoot in 4K at 30fps, which is something the X1 can’t do (but newer, even more expensive HoverAir drones can). Its half-inch sensor shoots video in a 16:9 aspect ratio with the option to record at 60fps in 1080p mode. It can also capture 12-megapixel stills in 4:3 or 16:9 aspect ratios and features the bare minimum of single-axis mechanical gimbal stabilization alongside some software stabilization tricks. DJI says it’ll also shoot video in 4:3, but that option wasn’t available in the firmware we tested.

The Neo has 20GB of onboard storage and — like the X1 — lacks any expansion option, but that doesn’t seem to present any issues, as the 4K videos usually only last between 10 and 30 seconds. DJI’s battery lasts longer at up to 18 minutes, but that also helps to make it slightly heavier than the X1. Still, at 135g, it’s well below the all-important 250g threshold, making it exempt from the most onerous of drone licensing requirements.

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The Neo is also sold in a very attractive $289 combo bundle that includes three batteries and a USB-C charging hub. The two-way charging hub will charge all three batteries simultaneously in about an hour when used with a 45W charger. The Neo has a built-in USB-C port that also lets you charge its removable battery in about 50 minutes from a 15W charger, though we’ve seen this stop working a few times in our

prerelease firmware.

The Neo does not offer any gesture controls, but it can be controlled with voice commands after saying “Hey! Fly!” It can also be controlled from the DJI Fly app on a phone over a direct Wi-Fi connection. And like the HoverAir X1, the Neo can record audio from your phone’s built-in mic, which DJI will automatically overlay onto your recorded video without any swarming bee propeller sounds. The Neo can also record audio through DJI’s Mic 2 when paired over Bluetooth. 4K video files, ranging from 80MB to 200MB, transfer quickly to phones over a direct Wi-Fi connection or to laptops over a USB-C cable.

DJI’s Neo looks like a direct response to the HoverAir X1 that’s overtaken social media over the last year — at least, according to my own recommendation algorithms. Let’s see if Zero Zero Robotics lowers its HoverAir prices in response. Regardless, at $199 in the US, the Neo stands a very good chance of turning selfie drones into a mainstream gadget, for better or worse.

In Europe, DJI’s Neo is priced at a tax-inclusive £169 / €199. There’s also a £299 / €349 Neo Fly More Combo that bundles the Neo drone with DJI’s RC-N3 Remote Controller, three batteries and a charging hub, and spare parts.

DJI is not bundling any controllers in the US, and the Neo is unfortunately not compatible with DJI’s older sets of goggles or motion controllers for FPV flight, only the latest ones. For FPV flight, that means DJI’s Avata Explorer Combo is currently a better deal; in Sean’s early tests, it also offers a more stable first-person flying experience than the Neo.

Photography by Thomas Ricker / The Verge

https://www.theverge.com/24236503/dji-neo-vs-hoverair-selfie-drone-specs-price-hands-on