Drone Videography Techniques

Practice and master the Top 5 most effective drone videography techniques!

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THE HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL SWEEPING SHOT

The "sweep" or the "pan" is the easiest type of shot because it doesn't require the drone to move from one point to the other. You could either do the panning horizontally or vertically.

Horizontal sweeps can be used to show the expanse of a particular area (think of it as a video version of the panorama photography). It could also be used to track an object at it enters the scene and leaves. For example, you could track the movement of a car as it enters the frame of your shot by rotating the camera or yawing.

The vertical sweep can be used to reveal the height of a particular building or a tree or any tall structure. It can also be used in action sports. An example would be in dirt bike racing.

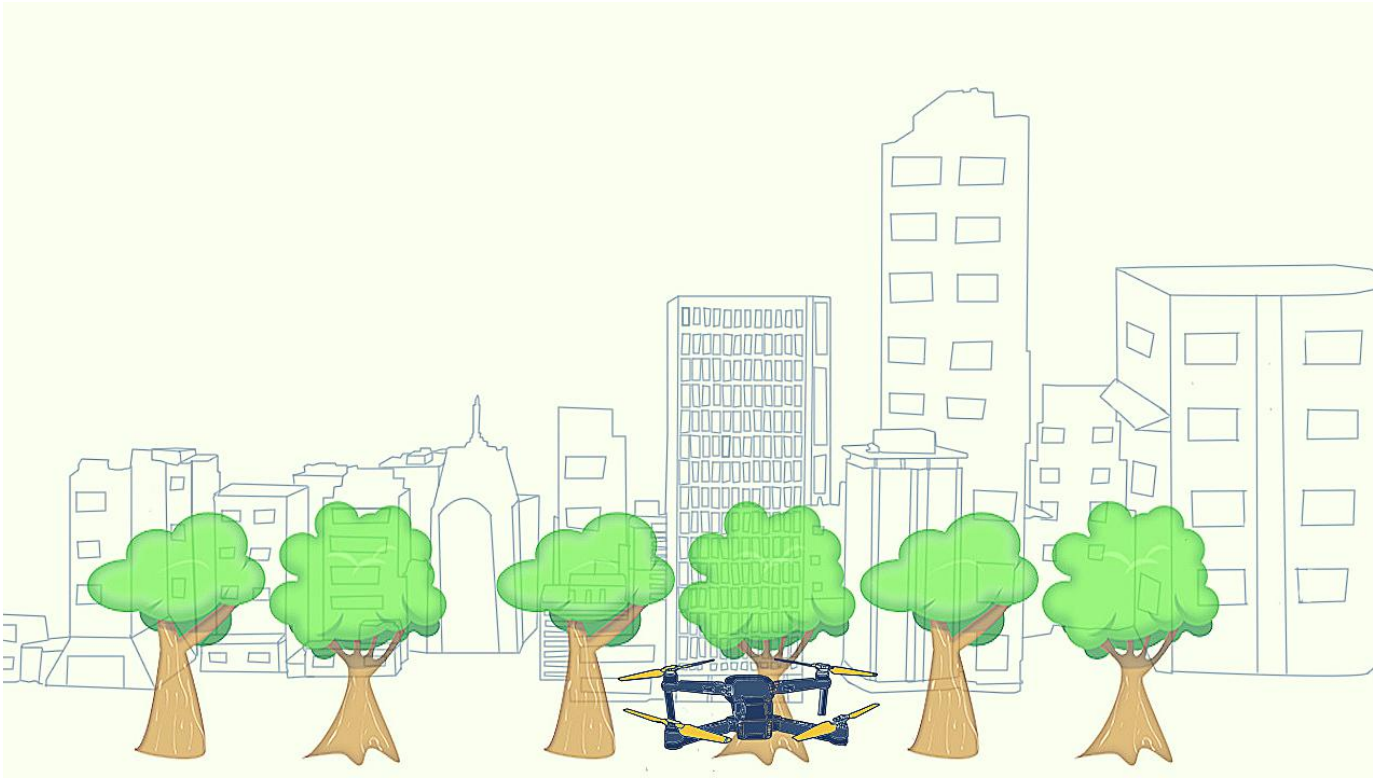
Key to execution

With the horizontal sweep, you either yaw the drone or move the camera horizontally. The vertical sweep can be done by tilting the gimbal up and down. Make sure to make the movements slow, controlled and gradual!

THE REVEALING SHOT

The reveal is a great opening shot. You can use this shot to introduce the audience to a new scenery or to the video clip itself and create a sense of "awe". To pull off a revealing shot, you need to make use of the foreground and the background.

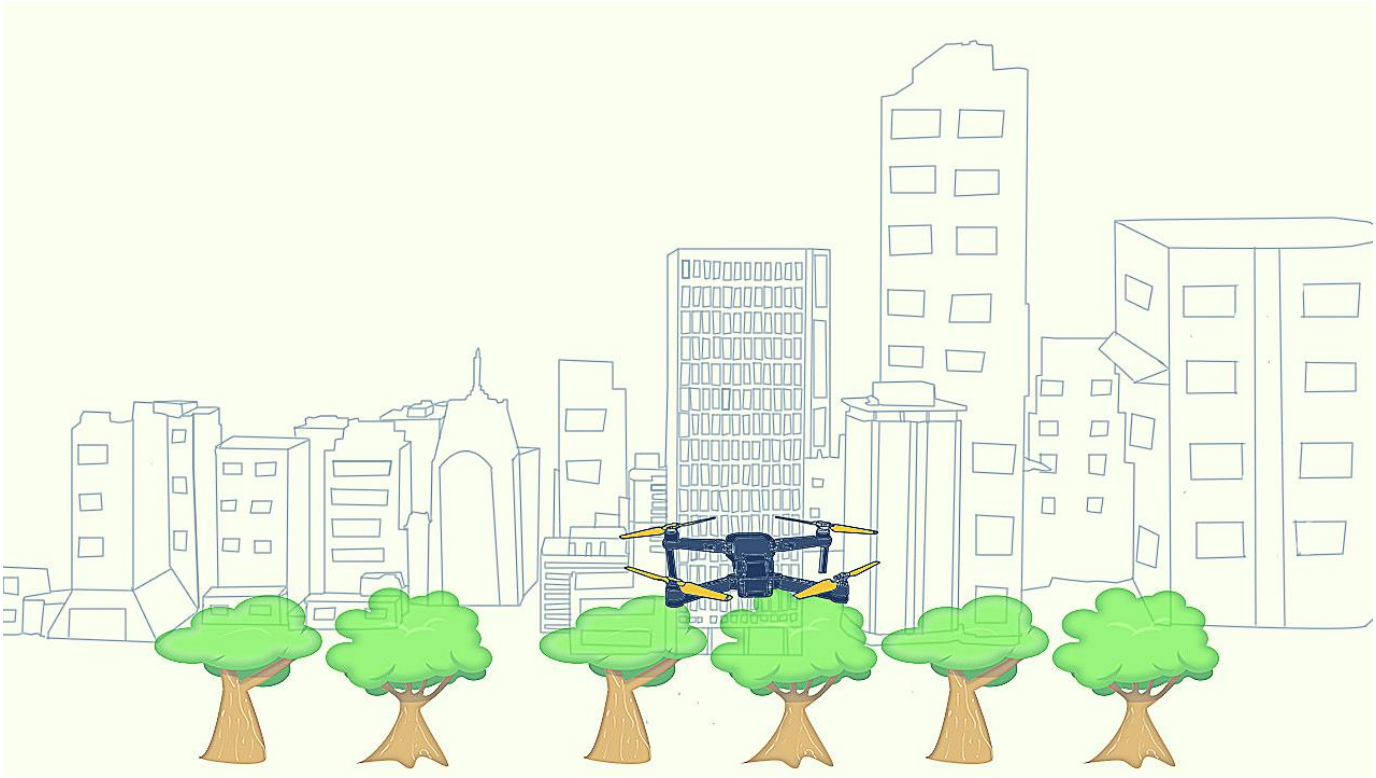
First, you fly low so only the foreground is visible and then slowly climb altitude, revealing the background. The foreground can be anything – a tree, a building or a set of buildings, wall, or even a row of vehicles.



Drone at low altitude: background covered by foreground

Key to execution

The key to making this shot look amazing is to have a nice background. You should also make sure that the climbing of the altitude is smooth and gradual. No jerky movements.



Drone at higher altitude, revealing background. Thus the name reveal shot"

THE DRIVE AND LOOK-UP SHOT

This shot produces very similar results to the revealing shot. In the drive and look-up shot, the camera is pointed straight down. You fly forwards or backwards and tilt the camera gimbal up, revealing the background.

The key difference between the look-up and the reveal shot is that with the reveal shot, a foreground is used to hide the background while here, the same thing is accomplished by having the camera face down initially. The gimbal movement up will reveal the background.

This shot can also be used to keep a particular object at the center of the frame while flying backwards and tilting the gimbal.

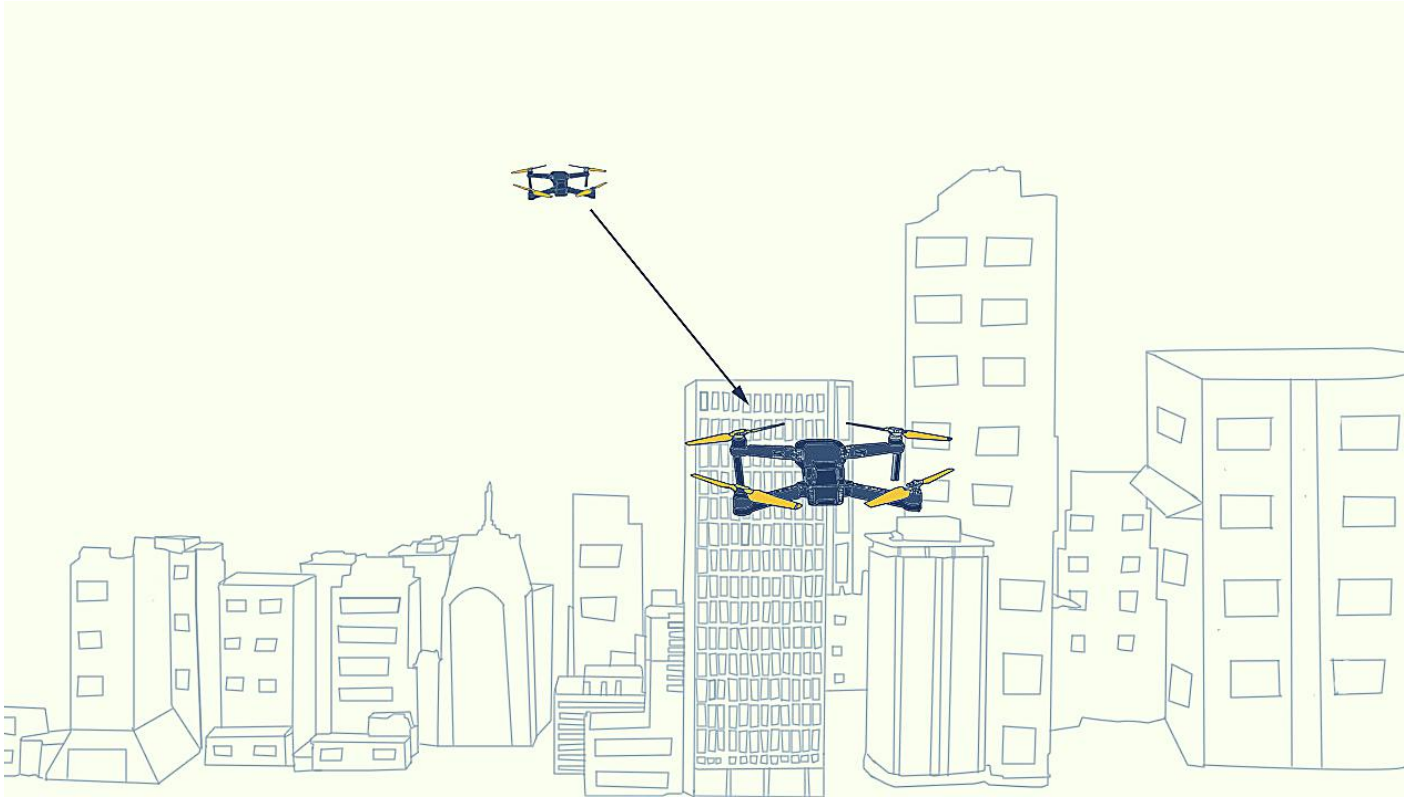
Key to execution

The key is to fly the drone slow and to tilt the gimbal gradually.

THE BACKWARD FLYING REVEALING SHOT

This shot is the direct opposite of the normal revealing shot. Instead of trying to reveal a nice background, we try to reveal a beautiful foreground flying the drone backwards, while first keeping the camera focused at a bland background.

The background here can be anything, but the foreground object(s) should tell a story about the scenery and the location. The backward flight can also be used to reveal a background while first focusing on a foreground, but it is best reserved for the opposite effect.



Key to execution

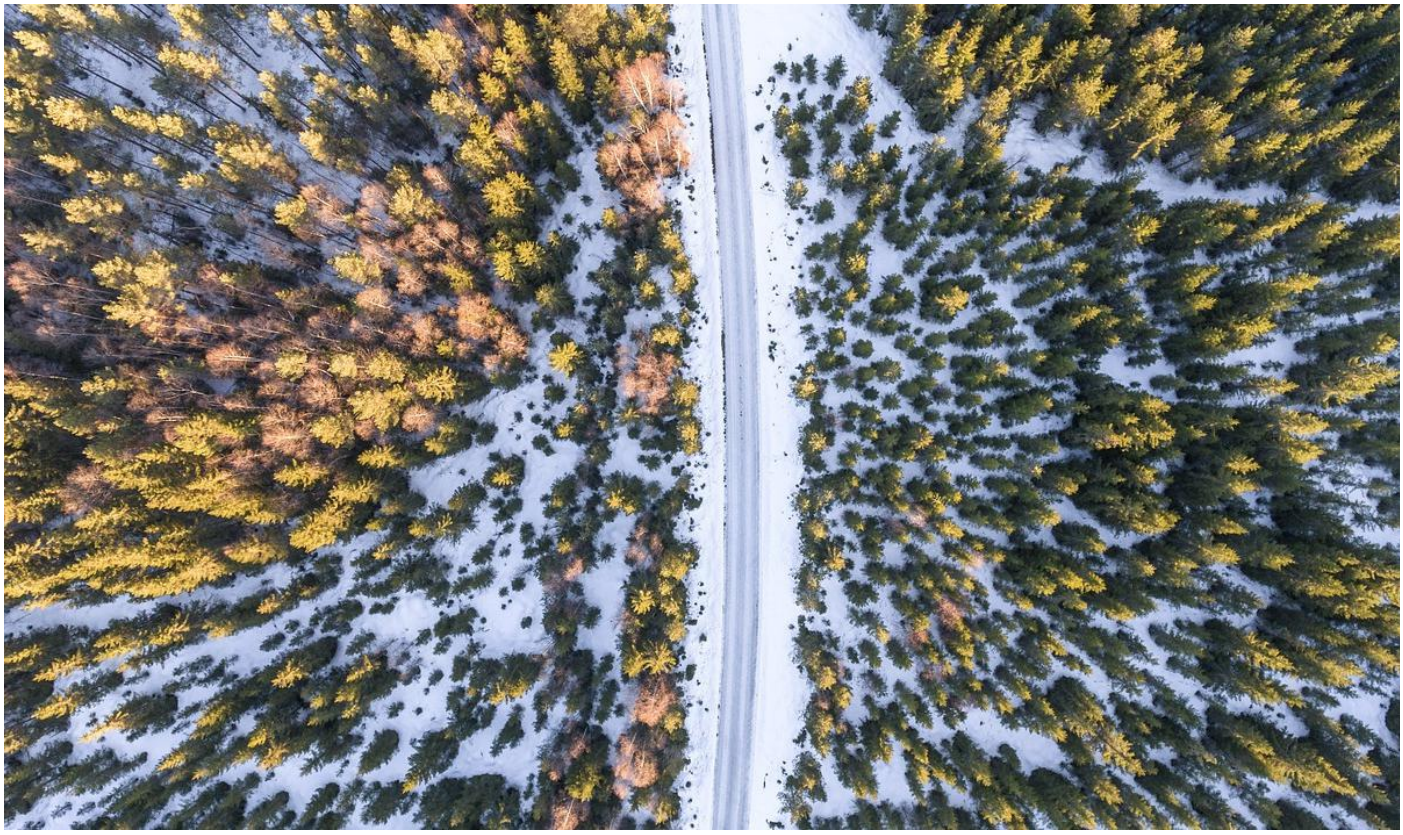
The key is to position the drone in front of the foreground such that when you fly the drone slowly backwards, the foreground will be revealed in about 3-4 seconds.

THE TOP-DOWN SHOT

This is a classic shot with two variations:

With the first variation, the drone is made to hover above an interesting object or a set of objects on the ground, camera facing the object(s). You then yaw the drone while simultaneously raising the altitude. Both the yaw and altitude gain should be done very slowly and smoothly.

With the second variation, the drone follows a set path on the ground, camera facing directly down the the path. The travelling along the path should be done very slowly.



Key to execution

In both variations, the key is to maintain a slow speed. In the first variation, the climb rate and yaw should also be slow and steady.