Use 360° images and videos from a CDN or cloud storage

Since WP VR 9.3.0, a scene can use a 360° image, and a video tour can use a 360° MP4 video, stored on a CDN or in cloud storage instead of the WordPress Media Library. Paste the file's direct URL, and WP VR checks it in your browser before saving: images must load publicly with CORS allowed, and videos must also pass a test render through WebGL, the graphics technology the 360° player uses. A tour with a URL that fails the check can't be saved.

This keeps large panoramas and videos off your web server, which saves disk space and bandwidth and lets a CDN serve them faster to visitors.

One trade-off: **Enable mobile media resizer** (**WP VR > Settings**) only works for Media Library images, so phones load the full external file, and the scene gallery uses it as the thumbnail.

Info	Availability
Version	WP VR 9.3.0 or later (this guide: 9.3.2)
Plan	Free and Pro. Free scene limits still apply
Editors	New UI and Classic UI
Storage	Amazon S3, Cloudflare R2, Google Cloud Storage, and other CDNs that serve direct file links
Images	JPEG, PNG or WebP, equirectangular 360° (cubemap faces too, in the Classic UI with Pro)
Videos	Direct MP4 links only, equirectangular 360°

Before you start

The file must be publicly reachable by a direct link, and the storage must send CORS headers that allow your website. Without CORS, the file can load in a browser tab but the 360° viewer cannot draw

it.

- **A direct file link.** The URL must point to the file itself, such as `https://cdn.example.com/tours/lobby.jpg`. Share pages, preview pages and links that need a login do not work.
- **Public read access.** Open the URL in a private browser window. If the image or video loads without signing in, it is public.
- **HTTPS.** Use HTTPS file URLs. WP VR rejects HTTP video links on HTTPS sites, and browsers may block or rewrite HTTP images on HTTPS pages.
- **CORS enabled.** The storage or CDN must send an `Access-Control-Allow-Origin` header that includes your site's domain (or `*`). WP VR displays panoramas with WebGL, which refuses cross-origin files that lack this header.
- **A supported file.** Images: JPEG, PNG or WebP. TIFF works only when uploaded to the Media Library, because most browsers can't display it from a URL. Videos: MP4 only. WebM, MOV, AVI and streaming formats (HLS `.m3u8`, DASH `.mpd`) are rejected for CDN playback.
- **Correct 360° shape.** Equirectangular files with a 2:1 ratio display correctly. Because phones get the full file, keep external panoramas at or below 4096 × 2048 px if many visitors use mobile, or test the tour on a phone.

CORS is set in your storage provider, not in WordPress. The next section shows how.

Set up CORS on your storage

Add a CORS rule that allows `GET` and `HEAD` requests from your website. Replace `https://www.example.com` with your site's address (scheme and domain, no trailing slash). Use `*` instead only if the files are meant to be used on any site. If you also preview tours on a staging site, add that address too.

Amazon S3

1. In the Amazon S3 console, choose **General purpose buckets**, then open your bucket.
2. Open the **Permissions** tab.
3. Under **Cross-origin resource sharing (CORS)**, choose **Edit**.
4. Paste the rule below and choose **Save changes**.

```
[
  {
    "AllowedOrigins": ["https://www.example.com"],
    "AllowedMethods": ["GET", "HEAD"],
    "AllowedHeaders": ["*"],
    "ExposeHeaders": ["Content-Length", "Content-Range", "Accept-Ranges"],
    "MaxAgeSeconds": 3600
  }
]
```

If the files are served through CloudFront, the distribution must also forward the CORS headers; otherwise the browser never receives them. AWS: Configuring CORS

Cloudflare R2

1. In the Cloudflare dashboard, go to **R2 object storage** and select your bucket.
2. Select **Settings**.
3. Under **CORS Policy**, select **Add CORS policy**.
4. On the **JSON** tab, paste the same rule as for Amazon S3, then select **Save**.

The bucket must allow public access through a public development URL or a custom domain. If a custom domain was already serving the files, purge its cache after adding the policy, or cached copies keep loading without CORS headers. Cloudflare: Configure CORS

Google Cloud Storage

CORS for Cloud Storage cannot be set in the Google Cloud console; use the gcloud CLI instead.

1. Save this as `cors.json`:

```
[
  {
    "origin": ["https://www.example.com"],
    "method": ["GET", "HEAD"],
    "responseHeader": ["Content-Type", "Content-Length", "Content-Range", "Accept-Ranges"],
    "maxAgeSeconds": 3600
  }
]
```

2. Run this command, replacing `BUCKET_NAME` with your bucket:

```
gcloud storage buckets update gs://BUCKET_NAME --cors-file=cors.json
```

Use file links in the form `https://storage.googleapis.com/BUCKET_NAME/FILE`. Google Cloud: Set up CORS

Other CDNs

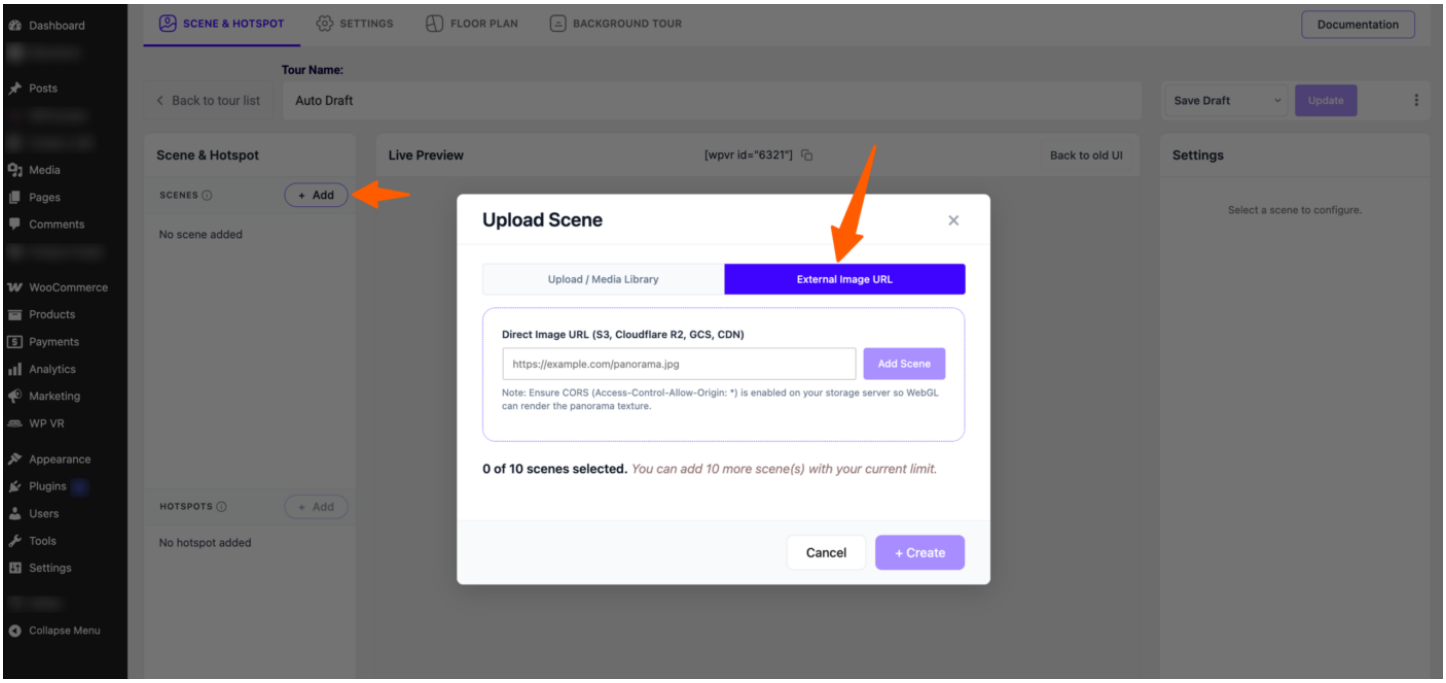
Look for a CORS, response headers or "allowed origins" setting in your CDN, and make it send `Access-Control-Allow-Origin` with your site's address. After the change, clear the CDN cache.

Add an external 360° image to a scene

Paste the image URL into the scene's **External Image URL** (New UI) or **External URL** (Classic UI) field; WP VR verifies it before the scene is created or saved.

New UI

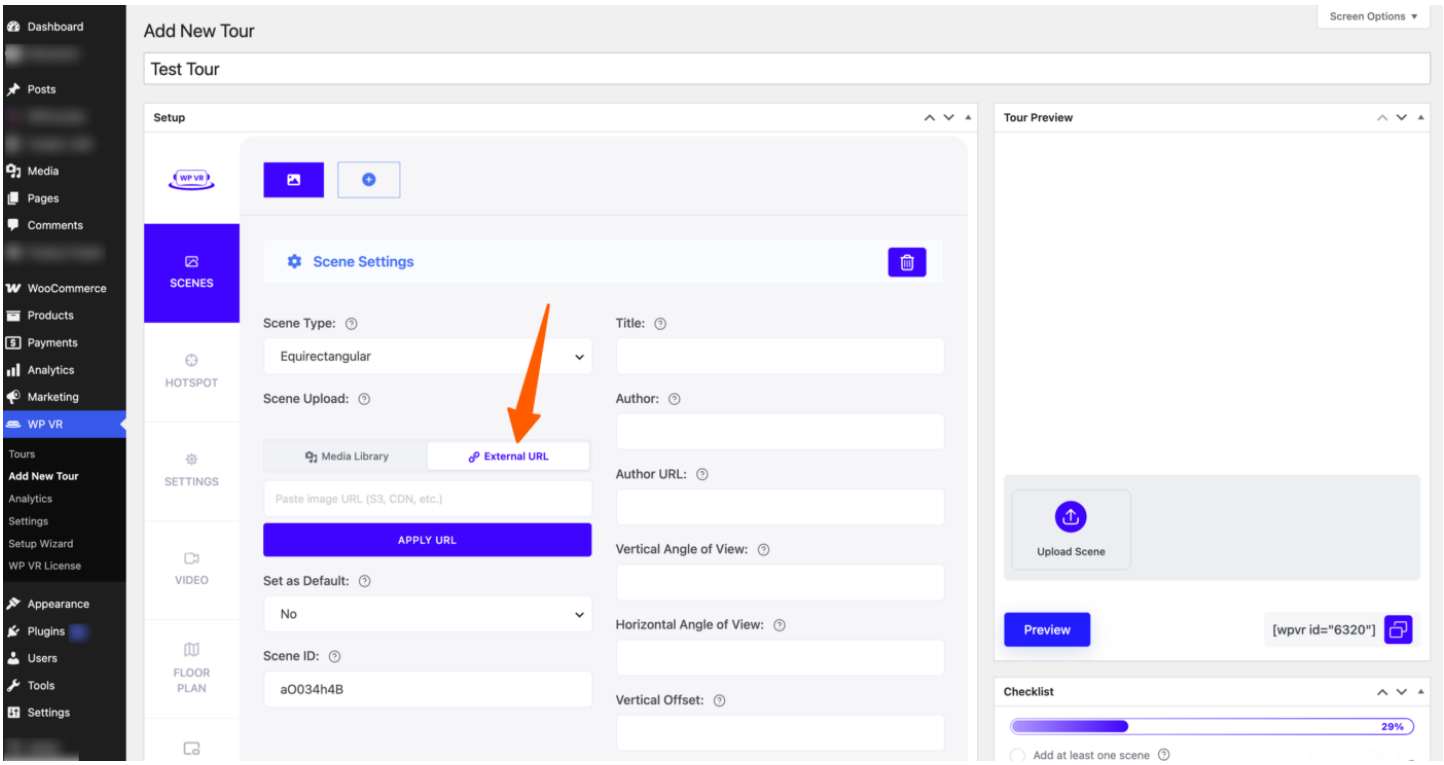
1. Open the tour and click **+ Add** next to **Scenes**. The **Upload Scene** window opens.
2. Select the **External Image URL** tab.
3. Paste the link into **Direct Image URL (S3, Cloudflare R2, GCS, CDN)**.
4. Click **Add Scene**. The button shows **Verifying…** while WP VR checks the image; if it passes, the image is added to the list in the window.
5. Optionally, change the **Scene name**, then click **+ Create Scene**.
6. Click **Publish** to save the tour.



To change the image of an existing scene, select the scene and click **Change Image** above the panorama preview. In the **Change Scene Image** window, select **External Image URL**, paste the new link and click **Apply URL**.

Classic UI

1. Open the tour and go to the **Scenes** tab.
2. In the scene's image field, select **External URL** instead of **Media Library**.
3. Paste the link into the URL field.
4. Click **Apply URL**. If the check passes, "Image applied successfully!" appears with the image size; otherwise a message explains the problem.
5. Click **Update** (or **Publish**) to save the tour.



In both editors, if a pasted URL fails the check, the tour won't save until you fix or remove that URL.

Add an external 360° video to a video tour

Choose **CDN URL** as the video source and paste a direct link to an MP4 file; WP VR loads it and test-renders a frame through WebGL before applying it. For YouTube or Vimeo, use the **YouTube / Vimeo** source instead.

New UI

1. Go to **WP VR > Tours > Add New**, enter a name and choose **360° Video**, or open an existing video tour.
2. Under **Video Source:**, select **CDN URL**.
3. Paste the link into **Video URL:**, for example `https://cdn.example.com/video.mp4`.
4. Click **Apply URL**. The button shows **Verifying...** while the video is checked.
5. When the check passes, the video appears in the preview. Click **Publish**.

Classic UI

1. Open the tour and go to the **Video** tab.

2. Set **Video Tour** to **On**.
3. Set **Video Source** to **CDN URL**.
4. Paste the link into **Video URL** and click **Apply URL**. A message confirms the video or explains the problem.
5. Click **Update** (or **Publish**).

To replace the video, paste a new link and click **Apply URL** again; **Remove** clears it.

In both editors, a CDN video URL that fails the check blocks saving until you fix or remove it. As a rule of thumb, encode the video as H.264 MP4 at 4K (3840 × 1920) or lower so most phones can play it.

Troubleshooting

Most rejected URLs are caused by missing CORS headers or by a link that is not a direct, public file link.

Find the message WP VR shows below the field:

Message	Where	What it means	What to do
Please enter a valid HTTP or HTTPS image URL. / …video URL.	Both editors	The link doesn't start with `http://` or `https://`	Copy the full link, starting with `https://`
The URL entered is not valid. / The URL entered is not a valid URL format.	Classic / New UI	The link is malformed	Copy the link again from your storage
Image is accessible, but the remote server blocked CORS (Access-Control-Allow-Origin)…	Classic UI	The image loads, but the storage doesn't allow your site	Add the CORS rule from "Set up CORS on your storage", clear the CDN cache, then try again

Unable to load image. Ensure the URL is a direct public image link...	Both editors	The image can't be reached, isn't public, the link opens a web page, or the browser can't display the format (such as TIFF). In the New UI this message also covers missing CORS	Open the link in a private browser window; it should show only the image. Then check the CORS rule and use JPEG, PNG or WebP
Connection timed out. The image host (or server) took too long to respond.	Both editors	The image didn't load within 10 seconds	Check the link and CDN, use a smaller file, then try again
Unable to load this video. Use a public MP4 link...	Both editors	The video can't be reached, isn't public, the browser can't decode it, or CORS is missing. This is the usual message when CORS is missing	Check the link in a private window, add the CORS rule, and use H.264 MP4
The video host blocked cross-origin access. Enable CORS for this site on the CDN.	Both editors	The video loads, but the browser refused to use it without CORS	Add the CORS rule, clear the CDN cache, then try again
This video cannot be used for 360° rendering...	Both editors	The video loads but can't be drawn in 3D	Re-encode as H.264 MP4 at 4K or lower, and check CORS
Please use a direct 360° MP4 video URL for CDN playback.	Both editors	The link is a YouTube or Vimeo page, or ends in .webm, .ogg, .ogv, .mov, .avi, .m3u8, .mpd or .html	Use **YouTube / Vimeo** as the source for those platforms, or convert the file to MP4
Please enter a YouTube or Vimeo URL, or select CDN URL for a direct video file.	Both editors (on save)	A direct file link was pasted under **YouTube / Vimeo**	Switch the video source to **CDN URL**
Use an HTTPS video URL on an HTTPS site.	Both editors	The video link starts with `http://` on an HTTPS site	Use the `https://` version of the link

Video verification timed out…	Both editors	The video didn't load within 15 seconds	Check the link and CDN, then click **Apply URL** again
WebGL is unavailable…	Both editors (video only)	The browser has WebGL turned off	Turn on hardware acceleration in the browser settings, or use another browser
Please resolve the panorama image URL error before saving. / …CDN video URL error…	New UI (on save)	A pasted URL failed its check	Fix or remove the URL in the scene or video settings, then save again
Unable to play this video…	Live tour page	The video player couldn't play the file for a visitor	Check the link is still public, the encoding is H.264 MP4 and CORS allows your site's address

The URL was accepted, but the scene is black on the live page. The CORS rule may allow only your admin address (for example `example.com`, while visitors use `www.example.com`). Add every address your site is served from, then clear the CDN and page cache.

Still stuck? Upload the file to the Media Library instead. It does not need CORS. If the issue persists, please contact our support team at support@rextheme.com or via https://rextheme.com/support/.

FAQ

Is this a Pro feature?

No. External image and video URLs work in the free plugin. The free limit of 5 scenes per tour still applies; Pro removes it.

Do I need to change anything in WordPress?

No. Only the storage or CDN needs a CORS rule.

Can I mix Media Library and external images in one tour?

Yes. Each scene has its own image source.

Can I use private files or signed (temporary) URLs?

No. Signed links expire, and the tour would stop loading for visitors. Use public files.

Can I use a Google Drive or Dropbox share link?

Usually not. Share links open a web page, not the file itself, and these services don't let you control CORS. Use a storage service or CDN that serves direct file links.

Does the URL check slow down my tour?

No. The check runs only in the editor when you add or apply a URL. Visitors load the file straight from your CDN.

What if I move the files to a new bucket later?

The tour keeps the old URL. Update each scene or video with the new link and update the tour again.