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S3 vs B2 vs Wasabi: Retrieval Cost Decision Guide

Price per terabyte is the wrong place to start. Retrieval is where the bill lands.

Updated **2026-10-29** · Full guide: www.mrplanb.com/blog/s3-b2-wasabi-real-cost-cheap-cloud-storage

S3, Backblaze B2 and Wasabi all look cheap per terabyte until you need files back. S3 rewards planning, B2 is simple but charges for egress, and Wasabi has no egress fees but enforces minimum storage durations. There is no universal winner, only the provider that fits how often you need your files back.

300–600GB
per job in the example media workflow

7–15
jobs a month in the example

90 days
typical Wasabi minimum storage duration

12h+
possible Deep Archive restore time

The three providers side by side

	AWS S3	Backblaze B2	Wasabi
Pricing style	Many tiers: Standard to Deep Archive	Simple, fewer tiers	Simple, no egress fees
Main trap	Restore time, per-GB retrieval, early deletion fees	Egress fees add up	Minimum durations (typically 90 days), minimum object sizes
Best when	You plan and automate lifecycle policies	Restores are occasional	Archive sits untouched, you want predictability
Weak when	Data is touched often	Constant large pulls for revisions	Many small assets, chaotic workflow

Why archive tiers bite

- Providers assume archived data is not touched for months or years.
- Glacier restore takes minutes to hours unless you pay for Instant Retrieval; Deep Archive can take 12 hours or more.
- Retrieval is billed per GB, and early deletion or moving too soon is billed for the retention you skipped.
- A 400GB 4K project pulled back three months later is where the providers stop being theoretical.

The proxy trick

What sophisticated media teams do to cut retrieval costs.

1. Store full-res masters in cold or archive tiers.
2. Generate small proxy files (1080p or lower).
3. Keep proxies in hot storage.

4. Let editors review, search and preview instantly.
5. Restore the full-res archive copy only when it is absolutely required.

Check before you commit

- [ ] Measure how often archived projects are actually touched.
- [ ] Run a cost simulation based on retrieval frequency, not storage size.
- [ ] Test a real restore workflow before you rely on it.
- [ ] Automate lifecycle transitions, with backup verified before the hot copy is deleted.
- [ ] Use cloud-to-cloud transfer tools instead of routing 20TB through a home connection.
- [ ] Compare against a NAS: cheaper long-term for pure storage, but needs a VPN, hardware care and extra tech for collaboration.

Pick by how you use the archive

If your archive is	Then
Rarely touched	S3 Glacier or Deep Archive can be extremely cost-effective; Wasabi is predictable and safe; B2 works if restores are occasional
More like sleeping projects	Egress and retrieval costs dominate; archive tiers may cost more than hot storage
Unclear	Intelligent tiering or a warm tier may be cheaper overall

Sources and notes: AWS S3 Storage Classes · Backblaze B2 Cloud Storage Pricing · Wasabi Pricing and FAQ