



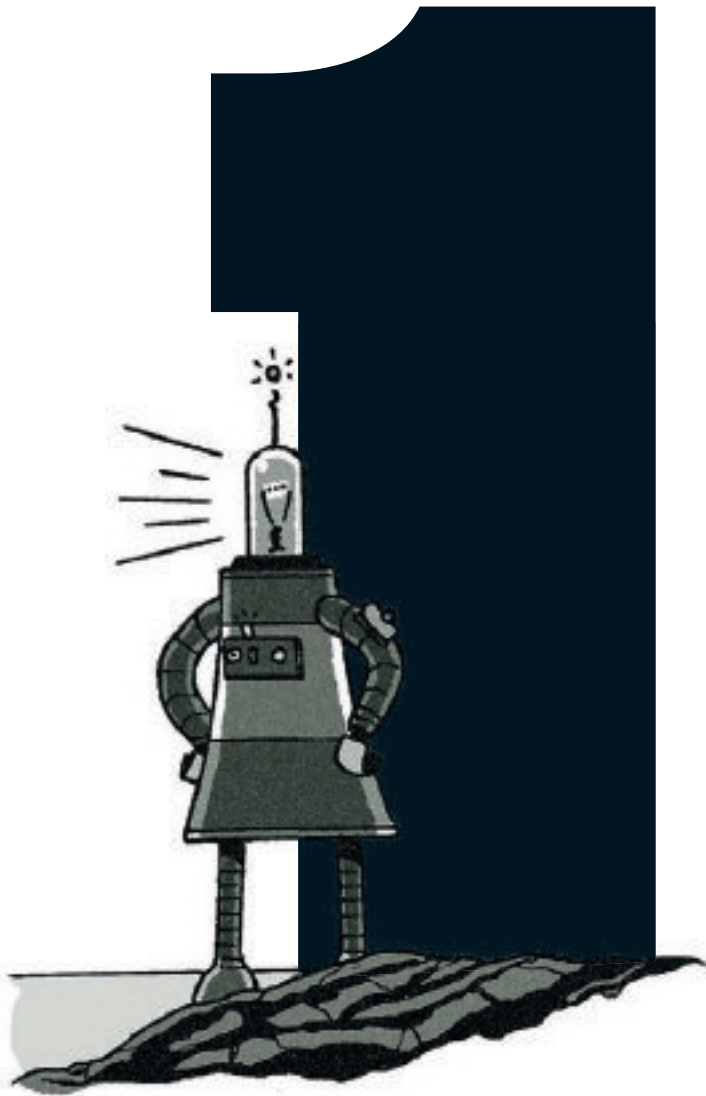
13

reasons **NOT** to
be a lighthouse keeper

Giving it all up for a life staring at the sea might sound tempting,



but lighthouse keeping isn't all it's cracked up to be...



IT ISN'T A GROWING FIELD

In fact, it's a rapidly shrinking field. Lighthouses have fallen victim to full-scale automation and some experts predict that, by 2030, lighthouses in developed countries will be entirely automated. According to maritime historian and lighthouse expert Jeremy D'Entremont, "Lighthouse keeping is pretty much dead as a profession." And he should know. These days, lighthouses use algorithmic software to control their signal beacons and code patterns, as well as remote-activated foghorns to communicate with ship captains, so there's little use for humans. There's currently only one full-time lighthouse keeper in the US: Sally Snowman, who tends to the Boston Light in the Outer Boston Harbour. "The loss of lighthouse-keeping culture, and so many other trades of bygone days, is really sad," she says.

2

The isolation will drive you potty

Nothing and no one but water. Endless water. The churning of the waves will slowly send you mad as you gaze into the sea, searching for answers, pondering how the twisted forks of your life brought you to this remote patch of rock on a forgotten coast. They say the sea helps you to forget. But all we know is that inside the lighthouse only you and the seagulls can hear your screams. Take it from Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson's characters in new movie *The Lighthouse*, a dark, hallucinatory tale of two keepers descending into alcoholism, madness and barely contained homoeroticism. According to Sally, there's one last unspeakable horror to contend with: giving tours to schoolchildren and New Jerseyites.

3

It will probably make you hate lighthouses

"I love lighthouses," you say to yourself, "why don't I just live in one and tend to it for my job?" Sounds smart, but think about it this way: how much do you really love your workplace? If you're hoping to avoid monstrous Excel spreadsheets, you're out of luck. "There's a tonne of paperwork and endless chores," explains Sally. "These old places are often built in the 1800s, and need a lot of work and attention, more than there are hours in the day!"



Standing 436 feet tall, Jeddah Light in Saudi Arabia is thought to be the highest in the world.

4

LIGHTHOUSES ARE REALLY TALL, AND YOU HAVE TO WALK UP THEM AGAIN AND AGAIN

Buoyed by the thought of the toned glutes and biceps you'll gain from lugging shopping bags up hundreds of stairs? Newsflash: the cardio blast gets old. Especially when the Hermes

delivery guy rings the bell and you've got approximately 1.5 seconds to make it downstairs before he disappears, taking your hardback copy of *101 Games to Play by Yourself* with him.

5

You can forget having a day off

Do you love a duvet day? Well, you can go ahead and kiss those goodbye. You'll have to be up at dawn to tend to the hundreds of small maintenance projects that need doing, in between all-important tasks such as flag raising and record keeping. "I'm up with the sun at 4:20am, and I go to bed when the sun sets at around 8:15pm," says Sally. Brutal hours.

6

You'll be taunted by flatpack furniture

The lighthouse's spiral shape makes interior design choices limited. It means you're destined to a life of building flatpack furniture, throwing Allen keys against the wall, and staring forlornly at rogue screws. Better start making room for all those instruction manuals. >

7

You'll need really good black-out blinds

Whale oil is out, replaced by a 2.4-mile-long electrical extension cord. Its sole mission? To power the 24/7 flashing light that's so powerful it can be seen through a howling force nine gale from 20.2 nautical miles away. Frankly, a sleep mask isn't going to cut it, and there's no way to stop the relentlessly blinking eye. "There's no off switch," says Sally, twitching slightly. "It's just always, always on."

8

You're not allowed to change your own lightbulbs

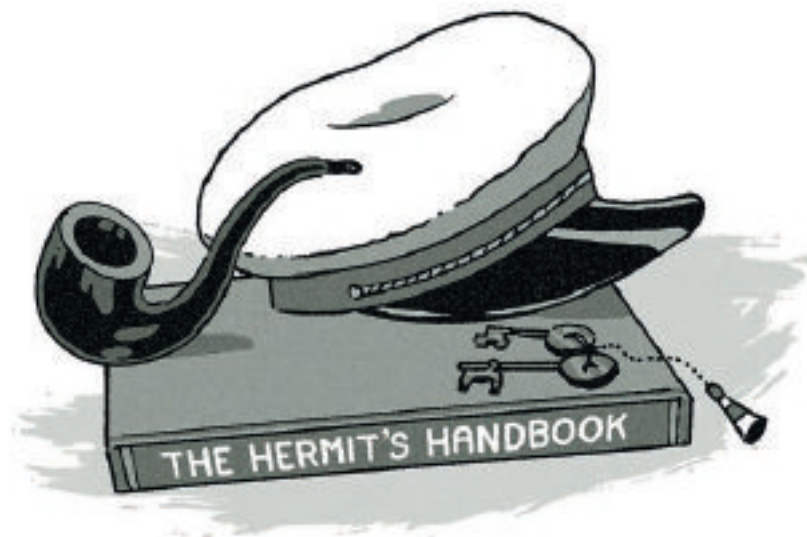
Can't wait to get your hands on one of those eight-tonne, nine-foot Fresnel lenses? Sure, in the time before automation, keepers had to watch over their lights day in and day out like fanatical moths. But not anymore. If a bulb needs replacing, Sally isn't permitted to roll up her sleeves and get on with the job herself — it's down to the US Coast Guard to fix. "The aids to navigation team goes up there quarterly to do maintenance," Sally says. So if there's a power cut, you could have a hideously long wait on your hands. Better get used to sparking two seashells against each other to boil water for a cuppa.

9

IT'S KIND OF EXPENSIVE

With take-home pay of roughly £2,500 per month, it might seem like keepers make a healthy salary. But gone are the days when the lighthouse company provided uniforms free of charge. You can blame privatisation and

government cutbacks on "non-essential spending", but the fact remains: if you want that sexy lighthouse keeper look, you've got to pay for it yourself. That hat, pipe and yellow rain slicker is coming out of your pocket.



Lone rangers

Working with other people not for you? Try these jobs for some extreme solitude



Goat herder
Fancy strolling the plains on your tod except for Black Phillip and pals? Grand. But if you're feeling horny, don't forget that *Brokeback Mountain* was about sheep herding - which is totally different.



10

MERMAIDS ARE NOT MARRIAGE MATERIAL

As a lighthouse keeper, you'll spend most of your time alone. So when a merperson pops up on a nearby rock, it's tempting to believe you can make a go of things. Opposites attract, right? A word of warning: ye and they be from different worlds entirely. It's a tragedy waiting to happen. Even without the supporting cast of singing lobsters and eccentric seagulls, it's unlikely to go the distance. >



Astronaut

On the plus side, this job spec means gazing down, *Gravity*-style, at planet Earth from afar - 249,205 miles away is the current record. On the minus side, there's always the fiery asteroids flying at your face.



Security guard

We've all seen *Night at the Museum*, but forget that fantasy guff and you've got yourself a bone-fide Billy No Mates role. The world is asleep, the exhibits are dead and you get to walk around like you're master of it all.



Antarctic researcher

Like the sound of working thousands of miles away from home in the freezing cold? Well, good luck to you. Sadly, anyone who's seen *The Thing* knows that this will not end well.

11

You'll head up a global PR campaign

Expert Jeremy D'Entremont, who has penned an incredible 18 books on the subject, notes that lighthouses are "one of the most familiar symbols in our culture, used by churches, schools and in advertising to symbolise hope, strength, guidance and finding safe harbour in troubled times". As a lighthouse keeper, you'd be in charge of managing that PR. Do you tend to give people a sense of safety and belonging? Do you inspire feelings of non-religious spirituality? Even then, you still might not be up to the task.

12

Good luck with that skin-care regime

A beard full of sea salt, starfish and seagull s**t. A diet of hardtack and barnacle soup. Pound upon pound of Fisherman's Friend lozenges. And the ever-present odour of rotting fish around your person. Let's face it, your physical appearance is going to take a bit of a hit if you take this job. Even if you cake yourself in heavy-duty moisturiser on the hour every hour, you'll be hard pushed to halt the weather-beaten lines etching themselves into your face. Yes, you'll enter that lighthouse a fresh-faced young pup and leave looking like a battered old shoe. They do say, however, that seaweed is rich with skin-boosting properties, and there's no shortage of that about. A money-spinning side hustle, perhaps?

13

YOUR BOSS IS ULTIMATELY THE SEA

... and she's a harsh mistress. Want to tone down that nor'easter? Ghost pirates stepped out of the fog again and messing with your chi? Ha! Good luck logging a complaint with HR. Still, while that humpback whale isn't going to give you a detailed performance evaluation, at least you won't have to make agonising small talk by the office microwave with Susan from payroll. Sadly, the only promotion you're likely to get is into an early watery grave when you slip off your lookout point from boredom. ■



📺 *Watch The Lighthouse*