

Proposal for Emoji: Lighthouse

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Identification :

- **Keywords:** lighthouse, sea, navigation, travel, light, enlightenment, safety, guidance, hope, maritime
- **Category:** Travel & Places place-building

Images



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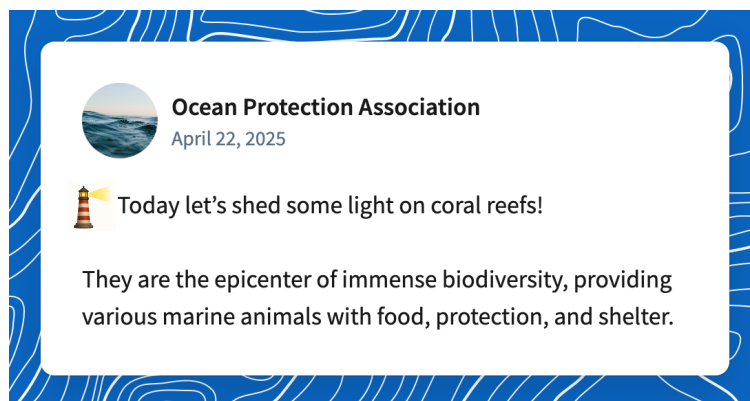
Factors for Inclusion

Multiple meanings

A lighthouse emoji transcends its literal depiction:

- **Navigation, Travel & Heritage:** Beyond their primary significance for maritime navigation, lighthouses are culturally iconic structures with a great heritage and frequently visited by tourists, present globally in maritime nations. Often located in isolated areas, lighthouses evoke tranquility, contemplation, and self-reflection.
- **Guidance & Direction:** Commonly symbolizes orientation, wisdom or guidance in difficult times (“a beacon in the dark”). Lighthouses represent navigation through life challenges, symbolizing the importance of making informed decisions and finding direction during uncertainty. They may also metaphorically represent mentors, friends, or inspirational figures who provide guidance and support.
- **Hope & Safety:** Represents protection, safety, a safeguard against danger (“light before the rocks”), and reassurance, warning ships of dangerous coastlines and hazardous waters. Symbolically, lighthouses embody a safe haven, resilience, comfort, and security, signifying protection and a beacon of hope in difficult situations.
- **Enlightenment & Wisdom:** Metaphorically signify intellectual growth, spiritual illumination, and self-improvement, encouraging continuous personal development and enlightenment.

Lighthouse emoji usage examples¹:



You really found the right person, I'm happy for you 😊

Yes, he's truly a beacon in the dark 🗼

¹ Sample social network post and conversation created by ourselves. Ocean image under free [Unsplash License](https://unsplash.com/fr/photos/plan-deau-sous-le-ciel-6ArTTluciuA) <https://unsplash.com/fr/photos/plan-deau-sous-le-ciel-6ArTTluciuA>

Use in sequences

Lighthouse emoji pairs effectively with others to convey compelling ideas:

  → Safe navigation, emphasizing the lighthouse's function in directing vessels safely

  → Warning/Vigilance, endurance through storms or challenging times

  → Enlightenment and guidance

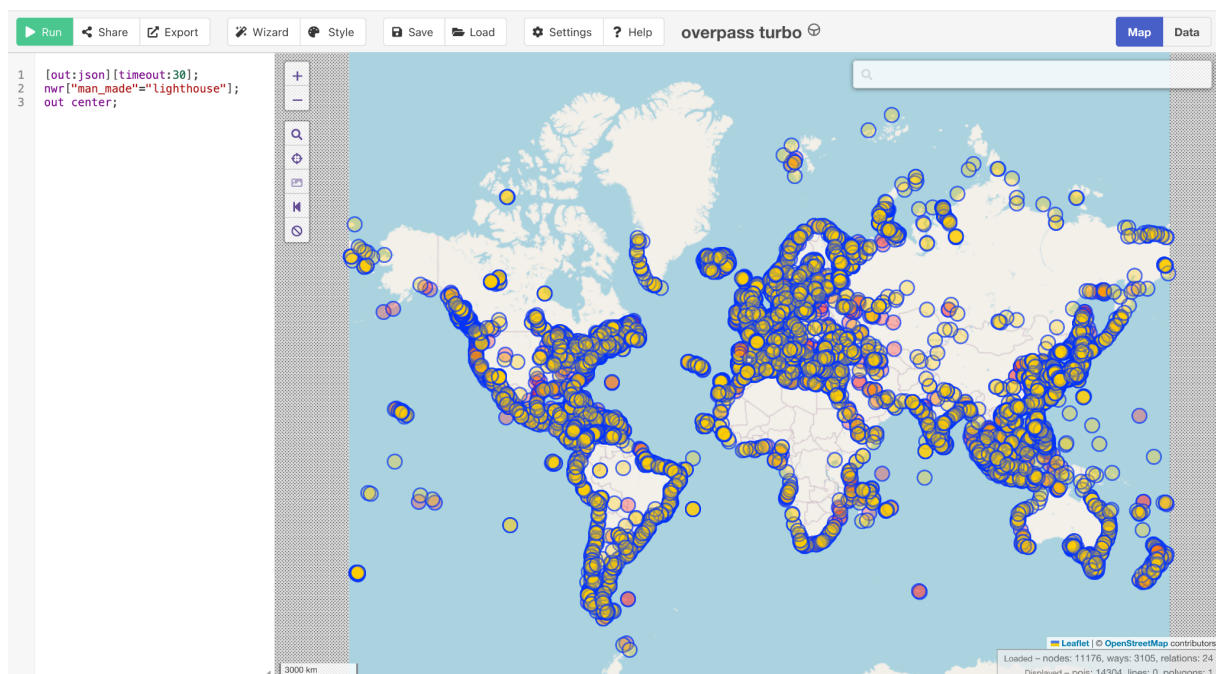
  → Beacon in darkness, symbolizing nighttime guidance

   → Solitude and distant guidance, isolation with a beacon offering hope from afar

Breaks new ground

To date, there are no building emoji representative of maritime navigation, safety or guidance (no harbor or beacon emoji for example).

With **more than 18,600 lighthouses standing along the world's coasts**², it is a universally powerful symbol, rich in meaning across continents, cultures, and spiritual traditions with a global metaphor of guidance, safety, and resilience.



*Distribution of the 18,600 lighthouses around the world
OpenStreetMap data on March 28th, 2025
<https://overpass-turbo.eu/s/21dr>*

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_lighthouses

Introducing a lighthouse emoji would not only fill a symbolic and functional gap in digital communication, but it would also amplify a deeply human metaphor recognized around the world: the idea of light guiding us through darkness, storms, or uncertainty.

In **Europe**, the lighthouse stands for **endurance and human struggle against the elements through time**. Famous examples include La Jument (France), Cape Finisterre (Spain), and the many legendary sentinels of Britain's and Scandinavia's rugged coasts.



Watercolour of the Bell Rock Lighthouse (U.K.) by J. M. W. Turner (1819)
*Scottish National Gallery, Public Domain*³

In **Asia**, the lighthouse is a sign of modernity and resilience. It holds **spiritual meaning in Buddhism**⁴ and a **symbolic place in national progress**. In Japan, the Amida cult (Pure Land Buddhism) describes Buddha as “a beacon of infinite light and compassion” for the faithful. In India, it's used metaphorically in both business and spiritual growth⁵.

In **America**, from haunted lighthouse tales in the U.S. to the poetic use of “farol” in Brazil, it's a **canvas for romanticism, mystery, and moral clarity**. Churches often adopt lighthouse iconography to signify moral guidance. The Statue of Liberty itself, although primarily a statue, served as a beacon at its inauguration (its torch illuminated New York harbour until 1902) and remains known as the “Beacon of Freedom” - the light of hope guiding immigrants to a new world⁶. The importance of the lighthouse in the USA history is now celebrated each year on August 7th⁷.

³https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_Rock_Lighthouse#/media/File:Joseph_Mallord_William_Turner_-_Bell_Rock_Lighthouse_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

⁴<https://fr.hdasianart.com/en/blogs/news/the-japanese-amitabha-buddha-a-beacon-of-infinite-light-and-compassion>

⁵<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/small-biz/sme-sector/india-emerges-as-inspiring-lighthouse-of-growth-amid-global-turbulence-itc-cmd-puri/articleshow/112096864.cms?from=mdr>

⁶<https://www.hrmm.org/history-blog/media-monday-statue-of-liberty>

⁷<https://lighthousefoundation.org/national-lighthouse-day/>

In **Oceania**, lighthouses serve as both practical markers and sacred places. At Cape Reinga (NZ), the lighthouse marks the crossing of spirits in Maori cosmology⁸. In Australia, they are places of memory, where lights are ceremonially lit to honor lives lost at sea.

Distinctiveness

Typically depicted as a tower with distinctive shape, horizontal stripes, a light beam, the lighthouse emoji would be visually distinctive, easily recognizable, and iconic, even at very small sizes.

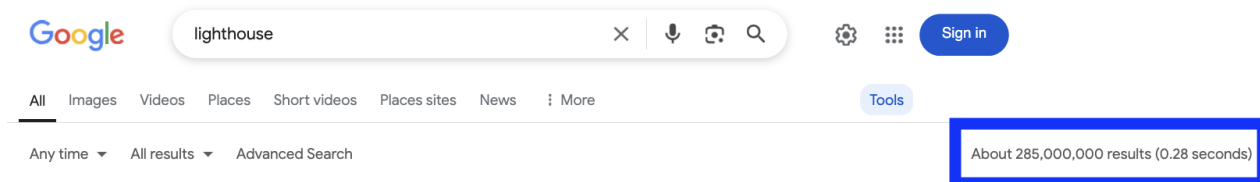


“Travel & Places place-building” emojis comparison

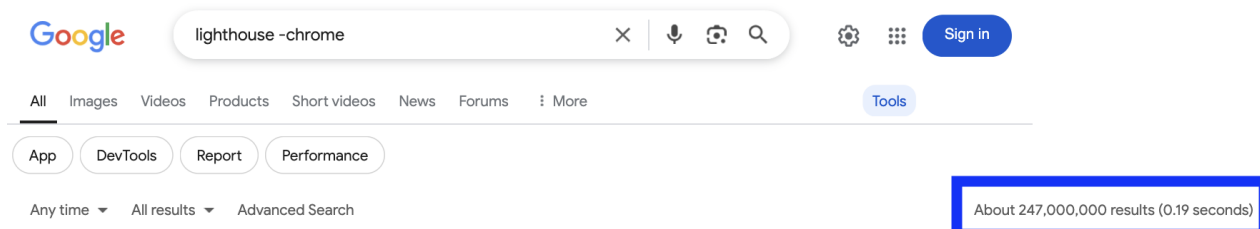
Usage level

Google Search

Lighthouse returns 285 million Google results.



Removing pages that also mention “chrome” to isolate out the Lighthouse tool in Chrome browser, gives us 247 million Google results.



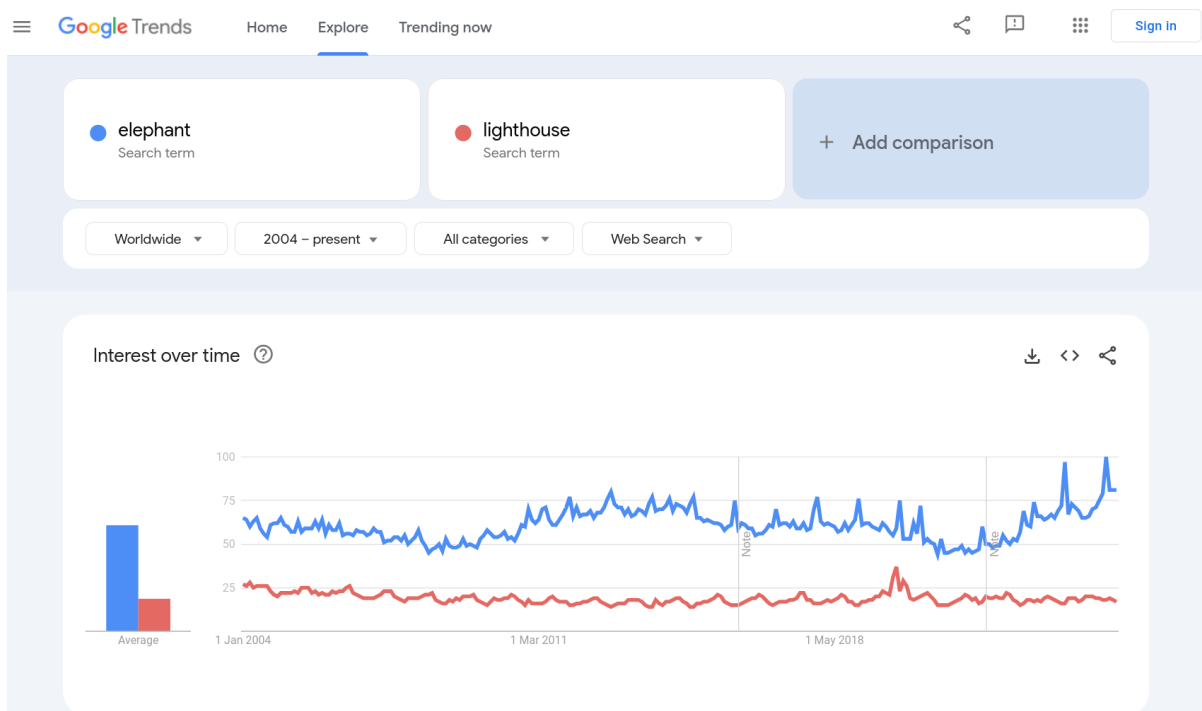
⁸<https://blog.doc.govt.nz/2016/02/01/cape-reinga-a-great-place-for-the-soul/>

Google Video Search

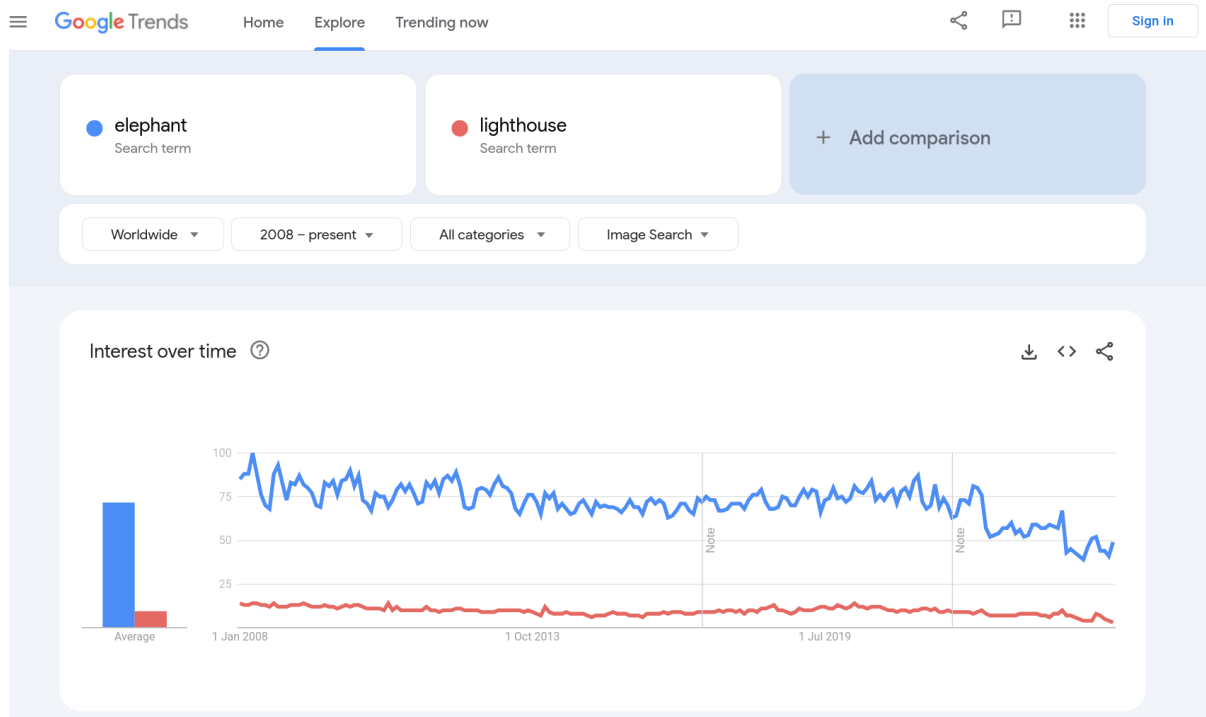
Lighthouse returns 12 million Google video results.

The screenshot shows the Google Video Search interface. The search bar contains the word "lighthouse". Below the search bar, there are tabs for "All", "Images", "Shopping", "Videos", "Short videos", "Maps", "News", and "More". The "Videos" tab is selected. On the right side, there is a "Tools" dropdown menu that is open, showing options: "Any duration", "Any time", "Any quality", "All videos", "Any source", "Advanced Search", and a highlighted box stating "About 12,000,000 results (0.35 seconds)". The search results show two video entries. The first entry is "Sierra Ferrell - Lighthouse (Alternate Version)" with a video player thumbnail showing a person playing guitar. The second entry is "The Lighthouse | Official Trailer HD | A24".

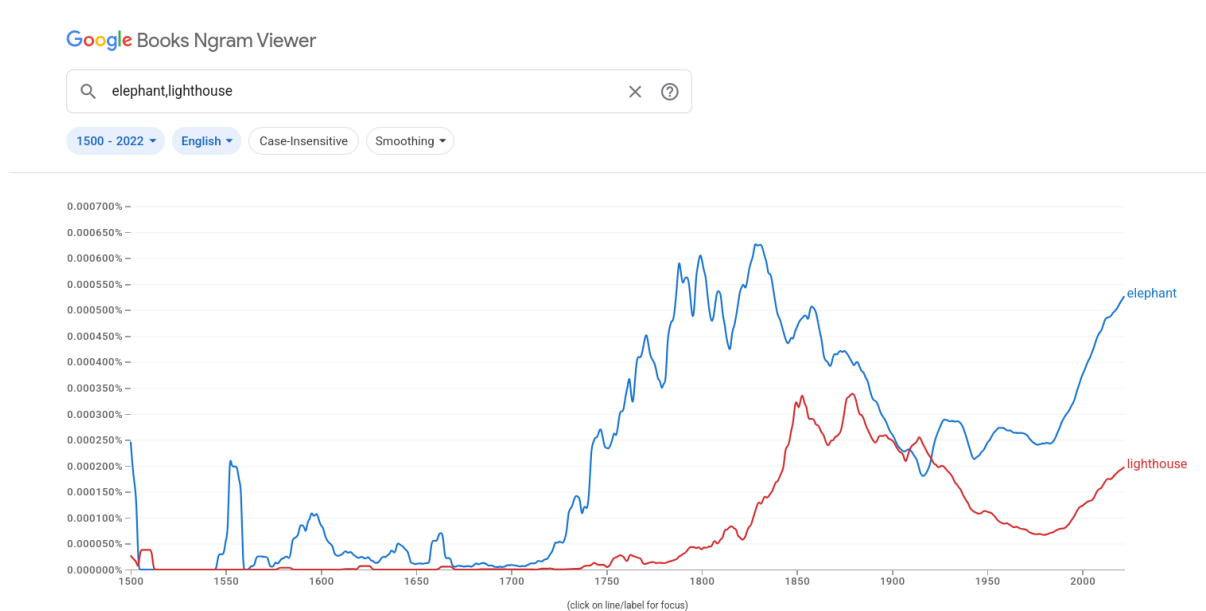
Google Trends: Web Search



Google Trends: Image Search



Google Books Ngram Viewer



Completeness

N/A

Compatibility

N/A

Factors for Exclusion

Already representable

No intuitive existing emoji sequence adequately captures the symbolism and distinctiveness provided by a lighthouse emoji. The closest representation could be 🌊🔦🏠, but it doesn't convey the associated ideology and meaning. Lighthouses have a distinctive visual representation that is universally recognized around the world.

Overly specific

All the world's lighthouses have a similar architecture, recognized by all cultures. There is no emoji that represents a more generic concept.

Open-ended

Not part of an overly broad or open-ended category. It does not imply future additions since a lighthouse represents the coastline and maritime navigation far better than any other symbol.

Transient

Lighthouses are significant historical symbols, existing for many centuries. One of the oldest is the Alexandria lighthouse built in Egypt in 280 BCE, the 7th wonder of the ancient world, which has marked the travels and history of many civilizations⁹.



XIIth century mosaic depicting St Mark arriving in the city of Alexandria, Public Domain



The Alexandria lighthouse is shown on a coin issued by the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 BCE), CC BY-SA 3.0¹⁰, Public Domain

Today, lighthouses are widely visited worldwide for their history and architecture, like the Tower of Hercules in Spain, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

They are still used for maritime navigation thanks to modernization (automation, LED lights) and being preserved through many programs (*National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act*¹¹ adopted in 2000 in the United States, *Société Nationale pour le Patrimoine des Phares et Balises*¹² founded in 2002 in France).

Since the 1800s, they have also been increasingly used for research and scientific instrumentation¹³.

Faulty comparison

The proposal for the lighthouse emoji does not depend on analogy with other emoji that were encoded only for compatibility reasons.

⁹ American Society of Overseas Research, October 2023:

<https://www.asor.org/anetoday/2023/10/pharos-lighthouse-alexandria>

¹⁰ <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PhareAlexandrie.jpg>

¹¹ National Park Service, March 2025:

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1220/national-historic-lighthouse-preservation-act-nhlpa.htm>

¹² Société Nationale pour le patrimoine des Phares et Balises, Wikipedia:

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9_Nationale_pour_le_patrimoine_des_Phares_et_Balises

¹³ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, August 2023:

<https://www.noaa.gov/heritage/stories/5-ways-historic-lighthouses-and-modern-science-come-together-at-noaa>