

Jacques Balmat Encyclopedia Article

Jacques Balmat

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Jacques Balmat

1762-1834

French gem cutter and fur trader who was part of a two-man team to first reach the top of the highest peak in western Europe. Jacques Balmat and Michel-Gabriel Paccard reached the summit of the 15,771-foot-tall (4,807-m) Mont Blanc on August 8, 1786. Their successful ascent spurred the ascent of the mountain a year later by aristocrat and well-known scientist Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, which in turn introduced mountaineering to the masses. Balmat, Paccard and Saussure are widely credited with instituting the modern sport of mountaineering.