

Louis Jolliet Encyclopedia Article

Louis Jolliet

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Louis Jolliet

1645-1700

French-Canadian fur trader who became the first European to make a voyage down the Mississippi River. Jolliet switched careers from priest to fur trader and eventually to explorer when he accepted the leadership of an expedition to discover whether the Mississippi flowed south to the Gulf Coast or west to the Pacific Ocean. Jolliet and fellow traveler Jacques Marquette followed the river only as far as present-day Louisiana, but they learned enough to know it emptied into the Gulf of Mexico.