Alberto Santos-Dumont Encyclopedia Article

Alberto Santos-Dumont

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Alberto Santos-Dumont

1873-1932

Brazilian aviator who pioneered the development of airships and made Europe's first sustained airplane flight. Living in Paris, Santos-Dumont built and flew a series of 14 increasingly sophisticated airships between 1898 and 1905. He turned his attention to heavier-thanair craft in 1906 and, after several abortive hops, he took off and flew for 722 feet (220 m) on November 12. The flight energized Europe's aviators, though their achievements still lagged well behind those of their American rivals.