



Within the Ruins

(18) Upon entry, you first encounter the **House of the Terrace Caretaker**. Bingham surmised that Machu Picchu was divided into agricultural and urban sectors. As they did elsewhere in the empire, the Inca carved agricultural terraces into the hillsides here

to grow produce and minimize erosion. Corn was the likely crop cultivated at Machu Picchu, though contemporary archaeologists wonder if the capacity and area of these terraces really could have supported a community of 1,000 residents. Absent are the elaborate irrigation systems seen at Inca ruins in the drier Sacred Valley. Machu Picchu's semitropical climate meant ample rain for most of the year.

(19) About a 20-minute walk up to the left of the entrance, the **Caretaker's Hut and Funeral Rock** provide the quintessential vista overlooking Machu Picchu, one that you've seen in dozens of photos, and yet nothing beats seeing the view in person, especially if your schedule permits an early morning visit to catch the misty sunrise. Bodies of nobles likely lay in state at the site, where they would have been eviscerated, dried, and prepared for mummification.

(20) Head back down the hill to the city itself; the **Dry Moat** separates the agricultural and urban sectors. After you enter the ruins through the terraces at the agricultural sector, you come to a series of 16 small, ritual (21) **Fountains** linked to the Inca worship of water.

(22) Beyond the fountains is the round **Temple of the Sun**, a marvel of perfect Inca stone assembly. Here, on June 22 (the date of the winter solstice in the southern hemisphere), sunlight shines through a small, trapezoid-shaped window and casts light into the middle of a large, flat granite stone presumed to be an Inca calendar. Prediction worked from both directions, too: looking out the window, astronomers sought the perfect view of the constellation Pleiades, revered as a symbol of crop fertility. Bingham dubbed the small cave below the temple the Royal Tomb, though no human remains were ever found here.

(23) Adjoining the temple is a two-story building Bingham called the **Palace of the Princess**. Archaeologists have doubted the accuracy of the name. Up a staircase, beyond the fountains and the temple, is a **rock quarry** (24) used by Inca masons. A stone staircase leads to the three-walled **Temple of the Three Windows** (25)-the entire east wall is hewn from a single massive rock with trapezoidal windows cut into it. Further investigation has shown that there were really five original windows.

(26) Another three-walled structure, the **Principal Temple** is so dubbed because its masonry is among Machu Picchu's best, a masterpiece of fitting together many-sided stones without mortar in true Inca fashion.

(27) A secondary temple abuts the primary temple. Bingham called it the **Sacristy**. It was likely the place where priests prepared themselves for ceremonies.

(28) Onward is a hillock that leads to the famous **Intihuatana**, the so-called "Hitching Post of the Sun." Every important Inca center had one of these vertical stone columns (called gnomons), but their function remains a mystery. They likely did double duty as altars and time-measurement devices to divine the growing seasons. The Spanish destroyed most of the hitching posts they encountered throughout the empire, deeming them to be objects of pagan worship. Machu Picchu's is one of the few to survive—partially survive at least. Shamefully, its top was accidentally knocked off in 2001 during the filming of a Cusqueña beer commercial on the site.

Cross a large grassy plaza toward an area of other buildings and huts. (29) Their less elaborate construction led Bingham to dub this the (30) **Common Area**. Here you'll find the **Sacred Rock**, taking the shape in miniature of the mountain range visible behind it. Little is known of its purpose.

(31) A staircase leads to the **Temple of the Condor**, so named because the positioning of the stones resembles a giant condor, the symbol of heaven in the Inca cosmos. The structure's many small chambers led Bingham to dub it a "prison," a concept that did not likely exist in Inca society.