

## “The City in the Clouds – People of the Sun”

Text & Photos by Bruce Hamilton, AIA



**Partial View of Urban Center**

Hidden away for centuries in the mountainous cloud forest of Peru, there is the well-preserved Inca ruins of Machu Picchu. On the eastern slopes of the Peruvian Andes, Machu Picchu's walls, terraces, stairways and ramps blend seamlessly into its natural setting. The site's finely crafted stonework, terrace of fields and sophisticated irrigation system bear witness to the Inca civilization's architectural, agricultural and engineering prowess. There's something so special about this place and it really must be seen and experienced to be believed. Our expert local tour guide assisted our group in exploring the best viewpoints and pondering the many questions about its mysterious past. A UNESCO World Heritage

Site since 1983 and designated one of the Seven Wonders of the World in 2007, Machu Picchu is Peru's most visited attraction and South America's most famous ruins.

Archaeologists have identified several distinct sectors that together comprise the city, including a farming zone, a residential neighborhood, a royal district and a sacred area. Machu Picchu's most distinct and famous structures include the



**Eastern Side of the Agricultural Sector**



**Partial View of Residential Buildings Mixed with others of a Ceremonial Purpose**

Temple of the Sun and the Intihuatana, a sculpture of granite rock that is believed to have functioned as a solar clock or calendar. The Temple of the Sun is a semicircular tower with both its eastern and southern walls curved and adorned with windows that are oriented toward the appearance of the sun during the summer (south) and winter (east) solstice. In the center of the tower there is a rock that has been carved into the shape of an alter implying that it



**Temple of the Sun Facing Eastward**

With respect to their architecture, we noticed that the most prominent features were the trapezoidal doorways, windows, niches and in many cases the use of double door jambs. Also, many of the buildings are slightly inclined inwards giving the building a trapezoidal shape in itself.

Peru is as complex as its intricate and exquisite weavings. It is a unique and wonderful country which owns an exuberant biodiversity and is the scene of an extraordinary culture. There's a mix of incredible



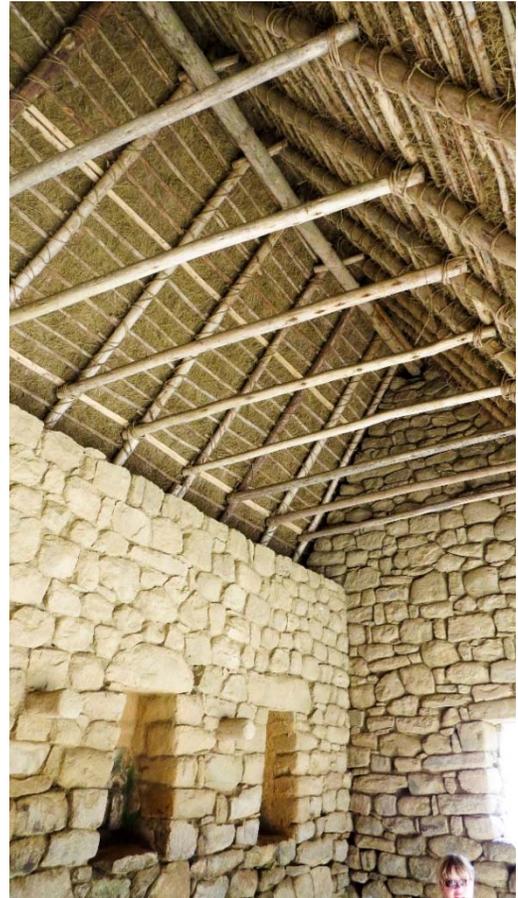
**Globetrotter at Machu Picchu**

**"The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page." St. Augustine**

and curiosity that incite us in the formation of a series of questions.

must have been used for ceremonies. The structure's characteristics make it clear that it was used as an observatory devoted to rituals that were centered on the presence of the sun, the Inca's deity.

According to our local tour guide concerning Incan tradition, the new year was celebrated on June 21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> during the winter solstice of the southern hemisphere. On that day, many different ceremonies were made to pay homage to the mother earth (Pachamama) and the sun (Inti). As noted to our tour group, that is why the Incas designed their temples to face the rising sun on that important day.



**Interior View of an Inca Building**

landscape, ancient ruins and world class food that makes Peru one of the most enduring popular tourists destinations. It is a privileged country, given the richness and variety of its natural and cultural patrimony which made it very attractive to our tour group. Undoubtedly, one of the greatest heirlooms the Andean people have left to the world is Machu Picchu, a masterful construction work which still stirs passion