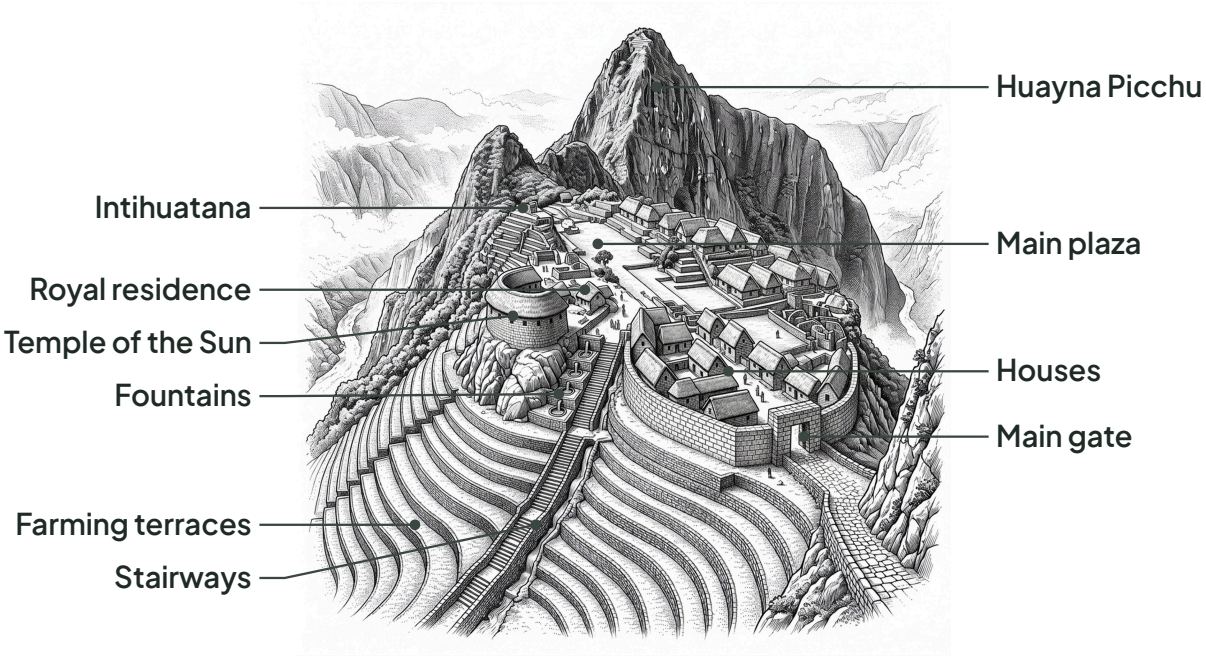
MACHU PICCHU ABOUT 1500

About 1500, Machu Picchu sat on a narrow mountain ridge high above the Urubamba River, with steep peaks rising on either side. Several hundred people lived and worked at this royal estate. Every building had a thatched roof then. Look for the farming terraces, the two halves of the city, the temples, the long line of fountains and the trail that brought travelers from Cusco. Water from a spring high on the mountain ran down a stone channel to a line of fountains, one below the next; the first stood beside the ruler's royal residence.



◆ WHAT THE LABELS SHOW ◆

Farming terraces Stone-walled fields stepped up the south slope. Layers of rock, gravel and soil inside drained the heavy rain, so the slope did not slide away.

Main gate The stone doorway where the Inca road from Cusco entered the city. A stone ring above and stone pegs inside held a wooden bar to close it.

Temple of the Sun A curved tower of finely fitted stone built on a great rock. Scholars think one window lines up with the sunrise at the June solstice.

Royal residence The finest group of houses, thought to be the ruler's. It stands beside the Temple of the Sun and got water first, from the top fountain.

Fountains A line of 16 stone fountains running down beside the main stair. A stone channel brought spring water from the mountain to each in turn.

Main plaza A long, flat, grassy open space between the two halves of the city, used for gatherings and ceremonies.

Intihuatana A stone carved from the bedrock on top of a stepped hill. Its name, given later, means "hitching post of the sun"; it was probably used in ceremonies.

Stairways Stone stairs, many cut into the bedrock, linking the city's levels. With no wheels and no animals to ride, people climbed every step on foot.

Houses Stone houses with steep thatched roofs set around small courtyards, for the workers, craftspeople and servants who lived at the estate.

Huayna Picchu The steep peak just north of the city. Its name means "young mountain." Inca builders cut terraces and paths even on its slopes.