A view of the Machu Picchu sentry house and some of the agricultural terraces below its west side, before the clouds drifted away. The altitude is about 8,000 ft, much higher than anywhere in Missouri! But the weather was consistently in the mid to upper-60’s (Fahrenheit) and the intermittent light rain showers were pleasant.
At the Steak and Shake in Rolla before leaving on our Peruvian adventure (L to R: Adrienne, Catherine, Bobby, Barbara, Dr. Gertsch, Joey, and Marcella). Photo courtesy of Dr. David Summers.

The back wall of the Main Temple at Machu Picchu “failed,” but the side wall is undamaged. Interesting.

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A back view of the Main Temple, showing how the deformed back wall and the pristine side wall remain interlocked.

Buildings were constructed on, under, and around the granite boulders left by landslides. Talus caves – voids created under and between such boulders – were special places.

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Some of these secret places beneath the boulders were enlarged. Though many are closed to visitors, not all are. In this one, notice the blocks placed carefully between the boulders in the roof to complete the room.
Mass picture-taking in Ollantaytambo, the day before arriving at Machu Picchu itself.

Catherine at a window in Ollantaytambo.
Some walls at Ollantaytambo were plaster-covered (photo courtesy of Barbara Summers).

The Urubamba River flowing around the back side of Machu Picchu.
Some of the agricultural terraces on the front side, south end, seen through a few roofless buildings. The spring that was the main source of drinking water lies on the forested slope.
Some of the buildings at Machu Picchu have not been reconstructed yet, and give a better idea of the state of the ruins when Hiram Bingham “discovered” them in 1911. The only difference is that these jumbled walls are no longer choked with vegetation. Park personnel keep them clear.
This is one of the fountains where people would get their drinking water. The water comes in by canal near the top of the site, where the Inca himself got first dibs, then flows through 16 fountains one into the other, down to the main drain. It’s delightful to follow the sound of water burbling and find these! Each one is slightly different.
Some steps were carved directly into boulders left in place. These are reminiscent of a Dr. Seuss illustration because the stone wall originally on the left side of the steps has been removed, leaving only the sockets carved out for the base blocks.
Other steps were half-carved (right side) and half-constructed (left side). Moisture from the rain a few hours earlier outlines the boundaries between blocks and boulders.
Although the overall impression of Machu Picchu is of mature, well-planned engineering, not everything was perfect. Here for example is one of the two “hinge pins” inside the main portal to the complex. Note how its upper socket had to be re-carved in a different position. The “pin” (diameter about 5 inches) is part of the lower granite block, which apparently had already been installed as part of the wall before the discrepancy was discovered.
Chinchillas and lizards live wild in Machu Picchu, along with llamas and several types of birds. Both of these smaller earthbound creatures were taking advantage of the sun peeking through the clouds while staying out of reach of the people. The llamas just wandered through, ignoring everyone.

The lizard’s sunning platform is for tying down the rafter poles that supported the original thatched roof. Many buildings had them, but not all.
This is where we stayed in Aguas Calientes. We had the entire top floor, with a great view of the town and the mountains on the other side of the river.

A butterfly outside our rooms.

Some fun with a sleeping roommate.
Studying for an upcoming calculus exam in the airport in Lima, Peru on the way back to Rolla.