**All the prices and wages are listed in denarii communes, which were not actually silver denarii as we usually think of when discussing ancient Roman coinage.  Denarii communes, or d.c., were notational currency.  What this means is, an exchange rate was given, telling how much of the currency in circulation at that time (nummii) it took to equal one d.c.  This made it easy to change the value of the money in circulation, without having to rewrite and redistribute the entire Edict.  A series of exchange tables are at the end of this page.**

**Wages in 301 AD in the Roman Empire**   
All data based on Diocletian’s “Edict of Maximum Prices” issued in 301 AD

**General Laborers**

brick maker, for every 4 fired bricks and preparation of the clay.............................2   
brick maker, for every 8 sun dried bricks, and preparation of the clay.....................2   
clerk (based on specified bath attendant wage).....................................................25   
farm laborer, with maintenance ..........................................................................25   
lime burner, with maintenance ............................................................................50   
mule driver, camel driver, with maintenance ........................................................25   
sewer cleaner, working a full day, with maintenance .............................................25   
shepherd, with maintenance ................................................................................25   
water carrier, working a full day, with maintenance ...............................................25   
all other general labor .........................................................................................25

**Skilled Laborers**

barber, per customer ..........................................................................................2   
cabinet maker, with maintenance ........................................................................50   
carpenter, with maintenance, daily ......................................................................50   
stone mason, with maintenance ..........................................................................50   
figure painter, with maintenance ........................................................................150   
fuller (Wool weaver), per cloak .........................................................................175   
marble paving and walls custodian, with maintenance ...........................................60   
wall mosaics worker, with maintenance ...............................................................60   
model maker, with maintenance ..........................................................................75   
other plaster worker, with maintenance ................................................................50   
parchment maker, for a quaternion, white or yellow parchment ..............................40   
shipwright of a river vessel, with maintenance .......................................................50   
shipwright of a seagoing vessel, with maintenance .................................................60   
tessellated floormaker , with maintenance .............................................................50   
wagon blacksmith, with maintenance ....................................................................50   
wagonwright, with maintenance ...........................................................................50   
wall painter, with maintenance .............................................................................75

**Professionals**

advocate, for opening a case ...............................................................................250   
for pleading a case .............................................................................................1000   
scribe, for the best writing 100 lines .....................................................................25   
for second quality writing ....................................................................................20   
secretary ............................................................................................................35   
notary, for writing a petition or legal document ......................................................10

**Teachers in Ancient Rome**

A teacher in ancient Rome would have lived in the home of a wealthy patrician, who would have provided the teacher with food and clothing appropriate to the house.  The teacher would not have had much spending money, but would have lived comfortably just the same.  These are salaries in denarii per month, per student.

elementary teacher ..............................................................................................50   
arithmetic teacher ................................................................................................75   
greek or Latin literature or Geometry ...................................................................200   
teacher of rhetoric or public speaking ...................................................................250

**Soldiers in Ancient Rome**

Soldiering was one of the best ways a Roman male could provide for his family.  The base wage was low, not enough to live on.  Four times a year, a soldier received a “Donative” greater than his annual base pay.  Additionally, soldiers received an annual “Annona” subsidy for grain purchases.  The best soldiers hoped to be recruited to the Praetorian Guard, the soldiers who guarded the Emperor.  These soldiers were paid roughly 3 times the base wage of the average soldier, and likely enjoyed many additional privileges as well.

Soldiers had high expenses in their profession, but they still came out much better than the average citizen even after expenses.  The soldiers were expected to pay for much of their own equipment, rations, and clothing.  They even had to pay part of the cost of burial for their fallen from their unit.

**Soldiers’ Pay:**   
average Roman soldier,annually .........................................................................1800   
Praetorian Guard, annually ................................................................................5500   
annual grain annona (1 per year) .........................................................................600   
donative (4 per year) .........................................................................................2500   
Additionally, every soldier received a grain allotment of   
30 modii of wheat per year that would be worth 3000

Total Annual Pay for an average Roman Soldier ..................................................15,400   
For a Praetorian Guard ......................................................................................19,100   
*Compare that to a general laborer working 305 days a year 7625*

**Soldiers’ Costs:**   
boots, without hobnails ......................................................................................100   
shoes, soldiers ...................................................................................................75   
saddle ..............................................................................................................500   
polisher, for a sword ..........................................................................................25   
       for a helmet ................................................................................................25   
       for an axe.....................................................................................................6   
       for a double axe ...........................................................................................8   
       for a sword scabbard ...................................................................................100

**Prices in 301 AD in the Roman Empire**   
All data based on Diocletian’s “Edict of Maximum Prices” issued in 301 AD

The Edict of Maximum Prices was an attempt to control runaway inflation and poverty in the Empire.  The penalty for exceeding the prices of the Edict was severe: death.  Not satisfied to execute just the seller, Diocletian decreed that the buyer was to be executed as well.  As a final measure, if a seller refused to sell his goods at the stated price, the penalty was death.

**Food**

**Dry Foods**   
*Prices refer to one modius unless otherwise indicated. 1 modius=8 liters dry measure.*   
alfalfa seed .....................................................................................................150   
barley .............................................................................................................60   
barley, cleaned ................................................................................................100   
beans ..............................................................................................................60   
beans, crushed ................................................................................................100   
chickpeas ........................................................................................................100   
flaxseed ...........................................................................................................150   
hayseed ............................................................................................................30   
lentils ...............................................................................................................100   
millet, crushed ..................................................................................................100   
millet, whole ......................................................................................................50   
oats ..................................................................................................................30   
peas, crushed ....................................................................................................100   
peas ..................................................................................................................60   
rice, cleaned .....................................................................................................200   
rye ...................................................................................................................60   
salt ..................................................................................................................100   
sesame .............................................................................................................200   
wheat ...............................................................................................................100

**Fruits & Vegetables**

cabbage or lettuce, head ......................................................................................½   
dessert grapes, libra .............................................................................................1   
fenugreek, modius ..............................................................................................100   
peaches, one, up to .............................................................................................½

**Meats and Fish**   
*Prices refer to one libra unless otherwise noted. 1 libra=326 grams or just under ¾ pound.*

beef ..................................................................................................................8   
chicken .............................................................................................................60   
fish, freshwater ..................................................................................................12   
second quality.....................................................................................................8   
fish, saltwater ....................................................................................................25   
second quality ...................................................................................................16   
goose, fattened .................................................................................................200   
not fattened ......................................................................................................100   
goat ..................................................................................................................12   
lamb .................................................................................................................12   
pheasant, depending on variety ........................................................................125-250   
pork ..................................................................................................................12   
sausage, depending on variety ...........................................................................10-16

**Wine, Beer & Oil**   
*Prices refer to one sextarius.  1 sextarius=1.14 Pints or .546 liters*   
beer, Celtic or Pannonian ....................................................................................4   
Egyptian ............................................................................................................2   
Aminean, Falernian, Picene, Sabine, Tiburtine regional wines ................................30   
aged wine .........................................................................................................24   
second quality ...................................................................................................16   
chrysattic wine ..................................................................................................24   
Maeonian wine, boiled down one-third ................................................................30   
must, boiled down .............................................................................................16   
must, boiled down one-half ................................................................................20   
rose wine ..........................................................................................................20   
spiced wine .......................................................................................................24   
wine with wormwood.........................................................................................20   
vin ordinaire (ordinary wine) ...............................................................................8   
olive oil, fresh ...................................................................................................40   
second quality ...................................................................................................24   
liquamen (fish sauce seasoning) ..........................................................................16   
second quality ...................................................................................................12   
vinegar and wine vinegar .....................................................................................6

**Clothing**

**Fabric**   
*Prices are per item or libra for raw materials.*

african cloak ....................................................................................................500   
Dalmatian tunic ...............................................................................................2000   
hooded cloak, Laodicean ..................................................................................4500   
soldier’s winter tunic .........................................................................................75   
wool from Tarentum .........................................................................................75   
white silk .......................................................................................................12,000   
purple silk † ...................................................................................................150,000   
*† Purple silk was to be used only at the direction of the Emperor under penalty of death.*

**Boots and Shoes**   
boots for mule drivers or farm workers, without hobnails ......................................120   
boots for soldiers, without hobnails .....................................................................100   
women’s boots ..................................................................................................60   
patrician’s shoes ................................................................................................150   
senatorial shoes .................................................................................................100   
equestrian’s shoes ..............................................................................................70   
soldier’s shoes ...................................................................................................75

**Sandals and Gallic Sandals**   
double-soled Gallic sandals for farm workers .......................................................80   
single soled Gallic sandals ..................................................................................50   
Gallic sandals for runners ...................................................................................60   
women’s oxhide sandals double-soled .................................................................50   
women’s oxhide sandals  single-soled ..................................................................30

**Exchange Rates of Currency to Denarii Communes**   
**From 297 to 308 A.D.**   
 

**Number of Denarii Communes exchanged for:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **293-300 A.D.** | **300-301 A.D.** | **301-307 A.D.** |
| **Aureus (gold)** | 600 | 1200 | 2400 |
| **Argenteus (silver)** | 25 | 50 | 100 |
| **Nummus ‡ (billon)** | 5 | 12.5 | 25 |
| **Radiate (billon)** | 2 | 2.5 | 5 |
| **Laureate (bronze)** | 1 | 1 | 1 |

  ‡Base Currency Unit

**To determine the buying power of the currencies above for a given time period, compare the exchange rate of the actual currency to the prices or wages listed on the preceding pages in denarii communes using the formula below:**

(Price from list in d.c.) X (Number of coins exchanged per d.c. from chart above) = Cost or Wage in actual currency