

Everyday life for rich people

Most people in ancient Greece were poor. However, if you were lucky enough to have money or high status in society, life was quite comfortable.

Homes

Rich people lived in homes made of wood, mud-brick or stone, with one or two floors. The rooms were arranged around a central courtyard. Houses contained furniture such as wooden stools and padded beds. Colourful tiles and paintings adorned the walls and floors. Very rich households even had baths!



Families

Women stayed at home and men went out to work. Most rich families had slaves who carried out tasks such as cleaning, shopping or childcare. Rich families sent their sons to school, while girls were taught skills such as cooking and weaving at home. A girl was expected to marry a man chosen by her father.

Food and drink

Rich people could afford a wide range of foods such as olives, grapes, goats cheese, wine, fruits, nuts, vegetables and bread. Many Greeks lived by the sea, so they enjoyed eating fresh seafood like octopus. They rarely ate meat. Rich families did not overeat, and had lots of rules for polite eating and drinking. Men and women often dined in different rooms, and everyone ate with their fingers. Rich families had their own well or sent their slaves to collect water from public fountains.

Jobs

Most wealthier men worked outside the home and held jobs such as lawyers, warriors, landowners and teachers. Very rich men owned and ran large households and land. Others worked in government or as army generals. Rich women were expected to make clothes, run the home and often manage the money.



Entertainment

Rich people enjoyed going to outdoor theatres to watch comedies and tragedies. These were about famous gods and heroes. Actors wore special masks to transform them into the character they were playing. All the actors were male, with boys playing the female roles. Greek people also enjoyed holding festivals to honour their gods. At home, rich children played with toys such as rattles, hoops, toy chariots, dolls and balls.

Everyday life for poor people

Most people in ancient Greece were poor and lived in the countryside or small villages. Life was hard for many, with long working hours. If you were really unlucky, you might even be a slave!

Homes

Poor people lived in simple homes made from mud-brick or wood. These homes had one or two rooms where everyone in the family lived, slept and ate. There was little furniture, and no bathroom, so people used streams or a bucket when they needed to go to the toilet. Some poor people lived in the houses of richer families, as slaves or servants.



Families

Women carried out all household tasks while their husbands worked outside the home. Girls from poor families married when they were older, so they could work at home for longer. Most poor children could not afford to go to school, and slaves were not allowed to go at all.

Food and drink

Many poor families grew olives for olive oil, baked bread and kept animals such as goats to provide them with cheese. Depending on where they lived, families could harvest vegetables, fruits, nuts and herbs from the land. However, meat was hardly ever eaten. Cutlery was not needed as people ate with their fingers. They drank water from streams or wells.

Jobs

Most poor people could not choose their jobs. Women stayed at home to cook, clean and look after their families. Most men worked as farmers, fishermen, labourers or slaves. Those in a higher class could train to be craftsmen such as masons, painters, potters and carpenters. Slaves who worked for richer families did whatever chores were required.

Entertainment

Some theatre tickets were free, so poorer people were able to attend shows. The government believed that people should hear the Greek myths and stories, and honour the gods during drama festivals.

Occasionally, women and children could attend the theatre. At home, poorer children made toys and games from natural objects like bones or seeds.

