

Country pursuits

One of the most popular recreations for a wealthy Roman on his country estate was hunting. Hares, deer or wild boar were tracked down and chased into nets where they could be speared to death. Long ropes, to which brightly coloured feathers were attached, were slung from trees to cut off the animal's retreat and frighten it back towards the nets.



The actual chasing was often left to slaves and dogs, while the hunter contented himself with waiting at the nets and spearing the boar or deer when it had become thoroughly entangled. Pliny, for example, in reporting a successful expedition on which he caught three boars, says that he took his stilus and writing-tablets with him to the hunt and jotted down ideas under the inspiration of the woodland scene while he waited for the boars to appear. But although Pliny's description of hunting is a very peaceful one, the sport still had its dangers: a cornered boar might turn on its pursuers, and a hunter who was slow with his spear might be gashed severely, even fatally.

Country pursuits

*The hunter
(bottom left) has been
gored by the cornered
boar.*



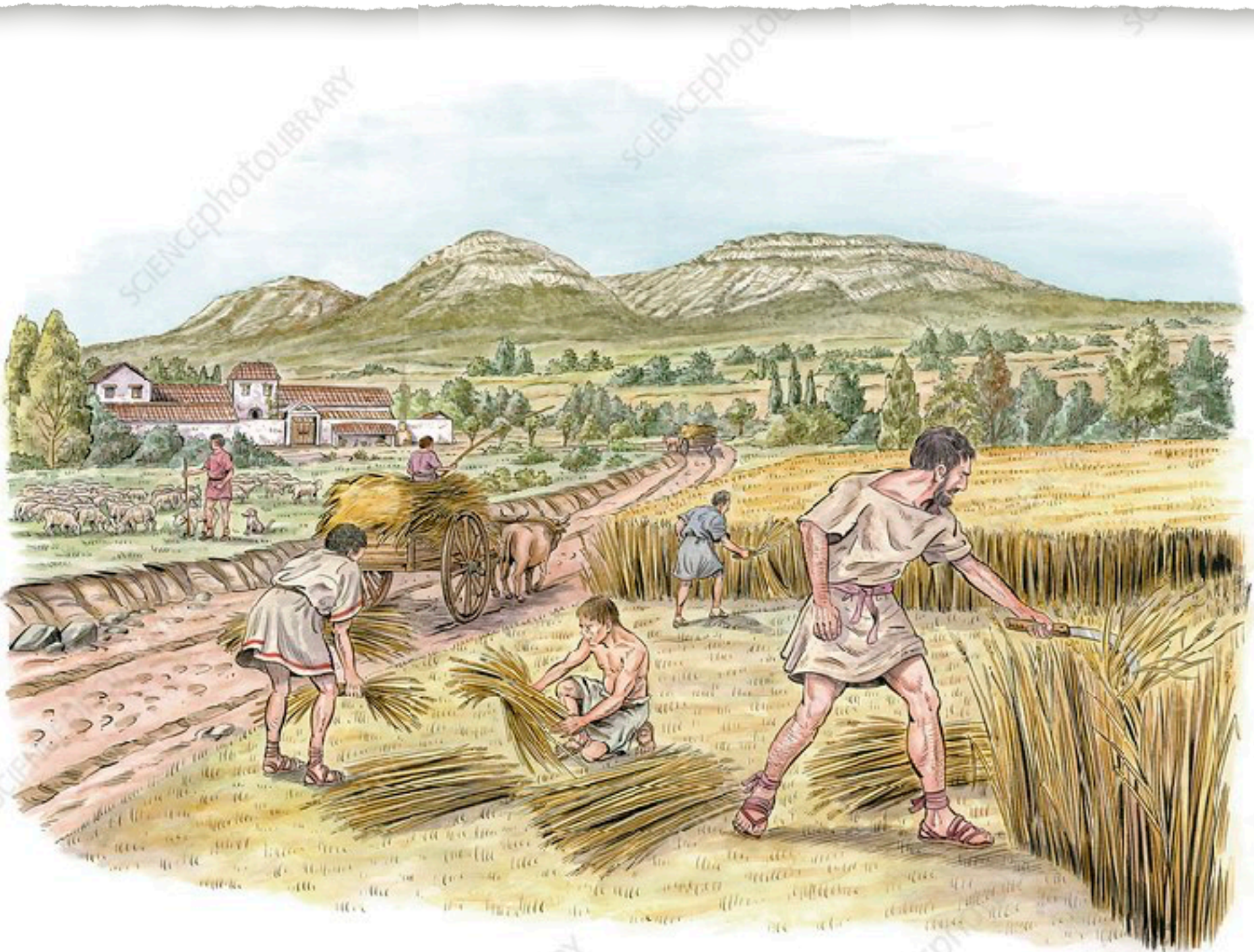
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Fishing also seems to have been popular, and could easily be combined with rowing or sailing, either on the sea (in the bay of Naples, for example) or on such lakes as the Lucrine lake, famous for its fish and its oysters. A lazier method of fishing is described by Martial, who refers to a villa with a bedroom directly overlooking the sea, so that the occupant could drop a fishing-line from the window and catch a fish without even getting out of bed.



People with fishing rods (left and centre) in a Pompeian painting of a seaside villa.

Some of Pliny's letters describe his daily routine at his country villas. He spent most of his time in gentle exercise (walking, riding or occasionally hunting), working on a speech or other piece of writing, dealing with his tenant-farmers (**colōnī**), entertaining friends, dining, or listening to a reading or to music.



Tenants paying their rent.

The economy of the villa

A country villa of this kind, however, was not just for vacation relaxation: it was an important investment.



Often there was a farm attached to the house, and the property would usually

include an extensive area of land which the owner might farm himself or lease to tenant-farmers. In the ancient world, by far the commonest way of investing money was to buy land.



Home task

identify and explain
the key features of a
Roman countryside
villa and country
activities available

Due Tuesday 3rd October

A picture of the villa

Name:

A description of the
surrounding land

Countryside activities and descriptions

Different types of farming, including
food and drink production

Reasons why it is better to live in the
countryside than the city

*GOOD if: you can list the different types of activities
and draw a pictures of a country villa*

*BETTER if: you can describe the different types of
activities and label the country villa in detail*

*BEST if: you can describe the different types of
activities and how the Romans did them, and
evaluate why life would be better for a Roman in
the countryside*