

Food and retirement

Since most soldiers are from the poorer classes and meat is rare in their diet, they cope well with the basic campaign diet. This is usually only hard biscuits and a porridge of cereal or chickpeas, supplemented by bacon, cheese, and a sour wine called *posca*. Preserved foods are easier to carry. A jerky of dried game or beef can stand in when salted pork is unavailable.

When a legionary reaches his full term, he may be discharged with the option of taking a sum of money or a land grant, originally Italian farmland. Now discharged veterans usually settle in the place where they have served and live in *colonia* (colonies).

Below: Reconstruction of Timgad in North Africa (now in Algeria), the colony for African veterans. Like a military camp, it has two main roads between the gates. Instead of the general's *Praetorium* there is the forum. The town has all the luxuries of civilized life: a theater, library, an arena (outside the picture), temples, and many public baths.



Organization of the 28 legions

Each legion numbers about 5,000 soldiers, divided into 10 'cohorts.' A cohort is organized into six 'centuries' of about 80 men, under the command of a centurion. The centurion's second in command is called an *optio*. The legion also has several standard bearers. The most senior, the *aquilifer*, carries the legion's eagle standard, while each century has a *signifer*, who also acts as the century's banker.

Above the centuriate there are six tribunes, drawn from the wealthy equestrian class. These are temporary postings, held as a step on their political careers. Although senior to any centurion, the sensible young tribune pays attention to his centurions' experience.

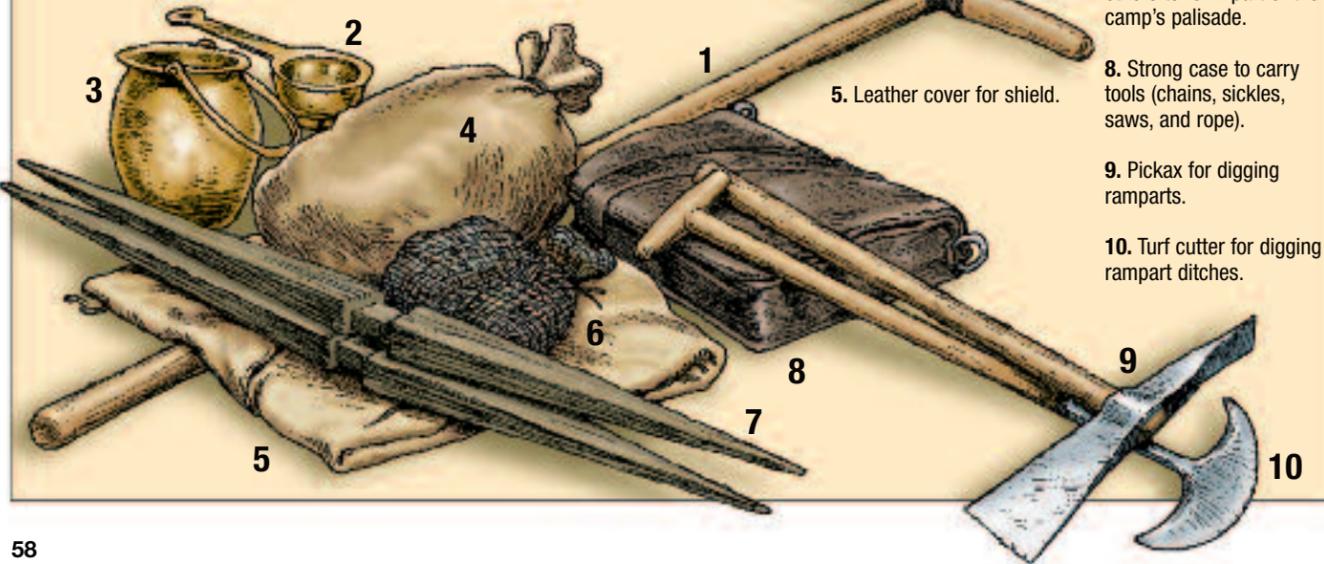
Above the tribunes the *legatus* (legate) is usually a senator appointed to command a legion by the emperor. He is supported by the *praefectus castrorum* (camp prefect), an older man who has been promoted to officer class from the rank of leading centurion (*primus pilus*). The legate has a considerable staff of professionals under his command, including guard commanders, intelligence officers, torturers and executioners, veterinary surgeons, doctors, clerks and engineers, and 120 horsemen to act as scouts and dispatch riders.



A centurion's armor is silvered. He wears leg protectors, or greaves, and has a semi-circular crest on his helmet. He wears his sword on the opposite side to the legionary.

A soldier is expected to carry all the essentials he needs with him. In addition to his weapons and armor his kit includes many other items. In all, this kit weighs about 90 pounds.

- 1. Cross-shaped pole to carry loose kit.
- 2. Bronze mess tin.
- 3. Bronze cook pot.
- 4. Sack to carry personal possessions, cloak, and cleaning kit.
- 5. Leather cover for shield.
- 6. Net bag to carry up to 15 days' food rations.
- 7. Pale, two wooden stakes to be tied to others to form part of the camp's palisade.
- 8. Strong case to carry tools (chains, sickles, saws, and rope).
- 9. Pickaxe for digging ramparts.
- 10. Turf cutter for digging rampart ditches.



- 1. Red-dyed tunic of wool or linen. A woolen cloak for cold weather and sleeping in.
- 2. Strong, well-ventilated *caligae* (half-boots) are laced by leather loops across the foot and up the ankle. The hob-nailed soles withstand hundreds of miles of marching. On the other hand, they can slip on hard, shiny paving.
- 3. Articulated body armor (*lorica segmenta*) is of several metal plates attached to each other by brass hooks, hinges, and leather straps.
- 4. Metal helmet to protect the skull, ears, and back of the neck. Its projecting brow is effective in head-butting.
- 5. Leather belt to hold a sword scabbard and a groin guard of leather strips with rivetted metal disks.
- 6. Curved, rectangular shield—about 4ft by just over 2ft—made from plywood covered in leather. A metal boss protects the handhold and adds battering power. The shield's bronze rim is used for thrusting up under an opponent's chin or slashing down on an unguarded shin or foot.
- 7. Short stabbing sword (*gladius*) made of hardened iron. Its sharp sides are parallel, rapidly tapering to a wicked point. The scabbard is made of wood and leather, held together with bronze straps.
- 8. Each soldier carries two *pila*. These javelins have a wooden shaft joined to the long spearhead by a section of soft iron. This is designed to bend on impact with the ground so that the enemy cannot throw the *pilum* back.