

From Acerenza (Saint Mark Fountain) to Genzano di Lucania (Cavallina Fountain)

A moderately difficult itinerary, covering 15.1 kilometres with an elevation gain of 470 metres uphill and 590 metres downhill, and taking around four and a half hours to complete. The route links two magnificent examples of nineteenth-century public architecture: the Saint Mark Fountain in Acerenza and the Cavallina Fountain in Genzano di Lucania. The route crosses a harmonious landscape of hills and valleys, following ancient routes that once connected Lucanian villages and were used for transhumance, offering highly evocative panoramic views. The Saint Mark Fountain, located just outside Acerenza, was built between 1831 and 1834 to a design by the engineer Scodes. Constructed in local stone and arranged on several levels, the fountain stands out for the elegance of its neoclassical lines and the balance it achieves between function and beauty. Its two large basins, fed by a natural spring, were used for water supply, washing clothes and watering animals, and over time became a social and symbolic landmark for the community. The presence of water—an essential element in Lucanian tradition—takes on here a sacred and collective significance, closely linked to work, purification and the everyday life of the village.



Figure 1. Saint Mark Fountain (Acerenza)

The walk continues over gentle hills and along ancient transhumance routes, passing through olive groves and wheat fields before reaching Genzano di Lucania, home to the monumental Cavallina Fountain—one of the town's most emblematic landmarks. Designed by the architect Giuseppe Antonio Locuratolo (1796–1872) and built between 1865 and 1893, the fountain is a masterpiece of Neoclassical architecture, characterised by an amphitheatre-like brick-and-stone structure, with cobbled paving, lateral ramps, and wrought-iron balustrades.

What makes the Cavallina Fountain truly distinctive is the statue of the goddess Ceres, the ancient Roman deity of the earth and fertility, discovered in the mid-nineteenth century in the locality of Pila Grande and placed atop the monument's upper arch. Affectionately known by the people of Genzano as *Sand'Abbunanza* ("Lady Abundance"), the goddess is depicted standing upright, holding a sheaf of wheat ears and lifting the hem of her peplos, a symbol of abundance and prosperity. The waters of the fountain, drawn from several natural springs, still feed the main basins, the watering trough and an underground cistern that once formed part of an ingenious nineteenth-century hydraulic system.

The Cavallina Fountain, once a meeting point and the centre of social life, was also a place of popular traditions and oral storytelling. Here, women gathered to wash clothes and exchange news, creating a true "water square", a rural agora. A widespread local legend tells that anyone who drank the water of the Cavallina would go mad—an ironic and affectionate tale intended to keep children from venturing too close to the deep basins.



Figure 2. Cavallina Fountain (Genzano di Lucania)

In 1978, the Cavallina Fountain was honoured on an Italian 120-lira postage stamp as part of the Fountains of Italy series, in recognition of its artistic and symbolic value. Restored in the early 1990s, it continues to stand as one of the most iconic sites of Lucanian culture.

The itinerary from Acerenza to Genzano di Lucania is therefore a journey through the culture of water, encompassing art, ingenuity and spirituality, set within a landscape where fountains are not merely monuments but living testimonies of collective memory—symbols of abundance, encounter and identity for the communities of Basilicata.