

From Atella (Angevin Tower) to Rionero in Vulture (Giustino Fortunato Square) via the Embrici Tower Archaeological Park

A walk that links the historical memory of Atella with the lively vitality of Rionero in Vulture, crossing landscapes shaped by volcanic activity and ancient places of worship. Covering 8.6 kilometres, with an elevation gain of 270 metres uphill and 140 metres downhill, and an average duration of around two and a half hours, this intermediate-level itinerary is ideal for those seeking an immersive experience combining nature, archaeology and culture. The route alternates between paved, compacted and dirt sections, guiding walkers through small valleys, vineyards and open vistas that express the authentic spirit of the Vulture area.

The starting point is Atella, an ancient village of Norman origin set in the heart of the Vulture valley. The walk begins at the Angevin Tower, the symbol of the town and the sole surviving element of the medieval castle that once dominated the settlement and the surrounding valley. Built between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the tower is a massive structure of local stone, with a square plan and imposing walls that clearly reflect its original defensive function. Over the centuries, it has also taken on a civic and symbolic role, becoming an emblem of Atella's feudal past and a privileged panoramic viewpoint from which to admire Mount Vulture and the villages scattered along its slopes.



Figure 1. Angevin Tower (Atella)

Around the tower, the historic centre retains the intact charm of a medieval village, with stone alleyways, arches, courtyards and stairways opening onto picturesque glimpses of the surrounding hills. Walking through the village, one breathes an atmosphere of tranquillity and authenticity, shaped by the slow rhythm of rural life and by traditions that remain deeply rooted within the community.

Leaving Atella behind, the path winds through hills and cultivated fields, following rural roads that climb towards one of the most evocative stops along the route: the Embrici Tower Archaeological Park. Located on a panoramic hilltop, the site preserves the remains of an ancient medieval settlement, dominated by a watchtower that once formed part of a defensive system controlling the valley. Archaeological excavations have brought to light dwellings, cisterns and ceramic fragments, bearing witness to the life of an agricultural and fortified community that flourished between the Early Middle Ages and the Norman period.

Today, from the top of the hill, there are spectacular views over Mount Vulture and the towns scattered along its slopes: Rionero, Barile, Rapolla and Melfi. It is an ideal place for a contemplative pause, immersed in the quiet of nature and the layered history of these lands.

From the park, the route continues downhill towards Rionero in Vulture, crossing landscapes typical of the volcanic area: Aglianico vineyards, small oak woods and stretches of dark, fertile soil.

Easy and panoramic, the path follows ancient farm tracks and skirts rural areas where time seems to have stood still. The journey ends in the heart of Rionero, in Giustino Fortunato Square, named after the distinguished southern Italian thinker born in this town. Here, among nineteenth-century buildings, historic cafés and the lively rhythm of everyday life, the walker rediscovers the energy of a modern town that has preserved its strong sense of identity. A visit to the Giustino Fortunato House Museum and the Vulture Museum is highly recommended, as they recount the cultural and geological history of this remarkable area.



Figure 2. Giustino Fortunato Square (Rionero in Vulture)

The route from Atella to Rionero in Vulture is a short yet intense journey that encapsulates the full variety and beauty of the Vulture–Melfese area: from the medieval memories of Atella to the evocative Embrici Tower, and finally to the vibrant energy of Rionero. It is an ideal itinerary for those who enjoy panoramic and cultural walks, alternating moments of reflection and discovery, inviting the traveller to slow down, observe and be guided by the landscape. Walking this route means crossing living lands, where human history and the power of nature have coexisted for centuries in harmonious balance, under the silent gaze of Mount Vulture.



Figure 3. Embrici Tower Archaeological Park