

From Maschito (Church of the Caroseno) to Ginestra (Church of Saint Nicholas the Bishop)

An itinerary linking two villages with a strong cultural and linguistic identity, Maschito and Ginestra, through a hilly landscape dominated by vineyards, olive groves and ancient farm tracks.

Covering of 11.4 kilometres, with an elevation gain of 410 metres uphill and 440 metres downhill, and an average walking time of around three and a half hours, this intermediate-level route offers an authentic journey into the heart of the Vulture area, where nature, memory and culture are harmoniously intertwined. The trail alternates paved, compacted and unpaved sections, crossing agricultural and panoramic areas that reveal rural life and the understated beauty of these places.

The walk begins in Maschito, a village founded in the 15th century by Albanian refugees fleeing the Ottoman invasion, like many other settlements in the Vulture region. The starting point is the Church of the Caroseno, built by the Greek Albanians of Corone and is renowned for its exceptionally fine fresco of the Madonna dated 1558 (*Madonna and Child*), brought to light in 1930 during restoration works on the church. Inside, there are also two large paintings depicting Pentecost and the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, both dating from the late 18th century.



Figure 1. Madonna and Child, fresco of the Church of the Caroseno (Maschito)

Leaving Maschito behind, the path enters a rural landscape that alternates orderly vineyards, centuries-old olive groves and wooded areas. The trails follow ancient farm tracks once used by farmers and shepherds to connect the villages of the Vulture area. The terrain is varied yet never monotonous: gentle ups and downs guide the eye towards the valleys and, in the distance, towards the unmistakable silhouette of Mount Vulture, the long-extinct volcano that dominates the region. During the grape harvest season, the air is scented with fermenting must and earth, and the colours of the vineyards glow red and gold, turning the walk into a truly sensory experience.

Along the route, small rural chapels and stone crosses recall the age-old bond between faith and agricultural labour, a defining feature of Lucanian rural culture.

On reaching Ginestra, the route ends at the Church of Saint Nicholas the Bishop, the spiritual heart of the village. Sacred buildings make up Ginestra's rich artistic and cultural heritage, among which the 16th century Mother Church dedicated to Saint Nicholas stands out, overlooking the square that bears the same name. The interior, with a single nave and barrel vault, houses important works of art: to the right of the presbytery is a baptismal font carved from local stone, while to the left stands the sculptural and pictorial group of the Madonna of Constantinople, patron of the town, admired for the harmonious balance of form and colour.

Particularly striking is the Byzantine mosaic of Christ Pantocrator, which echoes the Eastern iconographic tradition. To the right of the entrance is also a wooden Crucifix carved by Giuseppe Figarazzi, a powerful testament to local devotion and artistic sensibility.



Figure 2. Church of Saint Nicholas the Bishop (Ginestra)

The route from Maschito to Ginestra is a journey into the heart of Lucanian arbëreshë culture, an encounter between spirituality, tradition and landscape. Every step crosses the history of a people who have managed to preserve their identity while integrating into the land that welcomed them.

Among cultivated hills, rural silences and stone-built villages, this itinerary offers the opportunity to enjoy an authentic slow-walking experience, inviting discovery of the deeper soul of the Vulture area. It is the ideal route for those seeking the simple beauty of agricultural landscapes, the cultural richness of the arbëreshë communities, and the sense of peace that only the Lucanian countryside can offer.