

From Palazzo San Gervasio (D'Errico Art Gallery) to Banzi (Divine City of Bantia Museum) via Lake Frontetusio and the Sanctuary of the Madonna di Francavilla

A walk that weaves together art, nature and archaeology, linking two emblematic sites of Lucanian culture: the D'Errico Art Gallery in Palazzo San Gervasio and the Divine City of Bantia Museum in Banzi. With a total length of 16.9 kilometres, an elevation gain of 300 metres uphill and a descent of 200 metres, and an average walking time of around four and a half hours, this intermediate-level itinerary brings together the rural landscapes of the Vulture area and the millennia-old history of ancient Bantia.

The route alternates paved, compacted and unpaved sections, crossing gentle hills, cultivated fields and small watercourses, creating a perfect balance between art and landscape.

The walk begins in Palazzo San Gervasio, a village rich in history and culture, home to the magnificent D'Errico Palace, built between 1829 and 1833 at the behest of Agostino D'Errico. Today, the building houses the D'Errico Art Gallery and Library and represents a masterpiece of nineteenth-century Lucanian architecture. It preserves one of the most important collections of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Neapolitan art, with works by Luca Giordano, Salvator Rosa, Guido Reni, the Carracci family, Van Dyck, Ribera and Velázquez. Alongside the paintings, the engravings and rare books bear witness to the D'Errico family's passion for art and learning, which turned the palace into a true temple of southern Italian culture. Visiting the gallery before setting off allows travellers to immerse themselves in the artistic soul of the area, where beauty becomes memory and identity.



Figure 1. D'Errico Art Gallery (Palazzo San Gervasio)

Leaving the built-up area behind, the walk continues through wheat fields, vineyards and olive groves, with wide views over Mount Vulture and the surrounding valleys. After a few kilometres, the route reaches Lake Frontetusio, a small artificial basin set amid the greenery of the Santa Giulia municipal woodland. Its calm waters, surrounded by reeds and centuries-old trees, reflect the changing colours of the seasons and provide a refuge for numerous bird species. It is an ideal place for a contemplative pause, for those who enjoy nature photography or simply listening to the silence. The lakeshores, fitted with benches and wooden railings, invite rest, while the rich fish population makes the lake a popular destination for recreational anglers. One of the most evocative spots is the area known as "Il Salice" ("the Willow"), which offers shade and tranquillity during the hottest hours of the day.

Continuing along the path, the route reaches the Sanctuary of Madonna di Francavilla, nestled in the quiet of the municipal woodland area. Built on the foundations of a thirteenth-century medieval chapel, the sanctuary houses a precious polychrome wooden statue of the Madonna and Child, dating from the late nineteenth century. According to tradition, each spring the statue was carried in procession from the sanctuary to the village and brought back in autumn, in a

ritual that linked popular devotion to the cycle of the seasons and the blessing of the fields. The building, simple and harmonious in form, remains to this day a place of prayer and reflection, symbolising the deep bond between the community, the land and the sacred.



Figure 2. Lake Frontetusio (Palazzo San Gervasio)



Figure 3. Sanctuary of Madonna di Francavilla (Palazzo San Gervasio)

The final section of the walk crosses an open, luminous countryside before reaching Banzi, home to the Divine City of Bantia Museum, inaugurated in 2013. This modern, interactive museum tells the story of ancient Bantia—a Samnite and later Roman city—through archaeological artefacts, multimedia installations and thematic spaces. On the first floor, the section dedicated to Saint Benedict illustrates Benedictine spirituality and the role of monasteries in medieval culture. On the second floor, an immersive exhibition explores the ancient art of ornithomancy, divination through the flight of birds, practised in Italic and Roman temples, including that of Bantia in the 1st century BC. Thanks to the innovative use of light, sound and digital narration, the visit becomes a sensory experience that brings together knowledge and suggestion.

The route from Palazzo San Gervasio to Banzi is far more than a hiking route: it is a cultural and spiritual journey into the heart of Basilicata. From the art-filled rooms of the D'Errico Art Gallery to the shores of Lake Frontetusio, from the Sanctuary of Francavilla to the Museum of Bantia, each stage is a fragment of history that tells of the harmony between art, nature and faith. It is an ideal itinerary for those wishing to discover Basilicata step by step, following the rhythms of the land and the traces of the civilisations that have made it “divine”.



Figure 4. Divine City of Bantia Museum (Banzi)