

From Rapolla (Medieval Entrance Gate) to Melfi (Venosina Gate)

A short yet meaningful walk linking two of the most representative towns of the Vulture area: Rapolla, with its ancient spirituality, and Melfi, the imperial city of Frederick II.

Covering 3.68 kilometres, the route has an elevation gain of 140 metres uphill and 60 metres downhill, and can be completed in about one hour. It is an easy itinerary, suitable for everyone, alternating paved, compacted and unpaved sections, gently following the contours of the hills that connect the two towns. More than a simple walk, it is a journey that tells the story of faith and power in medieval Lucania, crossing landscapes of tuff, vineyards and olive groves that have sustained life in this area for centuries.

The walk begins in Rapolla, a village of Norman origin set on the slopes of Mount Vulture. The starting point is the Medieval Entrance Gate, the ancient gateway that once marked the main access to the historic centre.



Figure 1. Medieval Entrance Gate (Rapolla)

Shortly after leaving the built-up area, the path enters a landscape of vineyards and centuries-old olive groves, which have always formed the productive heart of the area. The hills, gentle and sunlit, are dotted with small farmhouses and *masserie*, witnesses to an ancient rural way of life that is still very much alive. Along the route, stretches of exposed tuff appear, revealing the volcanic nature of the soil and lending the landscape warm, golden tones.

The walk continues with a gentle, regular rise and fall, accompanied by the scent of the earth and the silence of the countryside. As the route enters the territory of Melfi, it draws closer to traces of imperial history. Here, among fields and dry-stone walls, one can still sense the echo of the footsteps of pilgrims and soldiers who over the centuries travelled these connecting routes between the two towns.

The arrival is at the Venosina Gate, one of the ancient gateways to the city of Melfi. Erected in the medieval period and restored several times over the centuries, it preserves the memory of the passage of travellers, merchants and knights.

The walk from Rapolla to Melfi is not merely a link between two villages, but a symbolic journey through the history of the Vulture area, where the spirituality of sacred places meets the grandeur of the architecture of power. Every step is an encounter with memory: stone, tuff, vineyards and castles—elements that speak of an ancient yet living land.

It is the perfect itinerary for those seeking a short but intense experience, where nature, history and landscape engage in a harmonious dialogue. Walking this route means rediscovering the medieval soul of Basilicata, along a stretch of road that connects two gateways: one opening onto spirituality, the other leading towards power and history.



Figure 2. Venosina Gate (Melfi)