

From Venosa (Abbey of the Holy Trinity) to Montemilone (Mother Church of Saint Stephen) via the Sanctuary of the Madonna of the Wood “La Gloriosa”

A walk that brings together spirituality, nature and history, linking Venosa—an ancient Roman town and birthplace of the poet Horace—with Montemilone, a village rooted in long-standing rural traditions, via the evocative Sanctuary of the Madonna of the Wood “La Gloriosa”.

Covering a distance of 19.5 kilometres, with 260 metres of ascent and 340 metres of descent, and an average duration of around five hours and twenty minutes, this demanding route crosses a harmonious rural landscape of gentle hills, vineyard rows and wheat fields. The surface alternates between paved, compacted and unpaved sections, making it ideal for those who enjoy hiking and pilgrimage routes immersed in the silence of the Lucanian countryside.

The journey begins in Venosa, one of the most fascinating towns in Basilicata, guardian of a millennia-old history rooted in the Roman era. The starting point is the Abbey of the Holy Trinity, one of the key sites of Lucanian spirituality, renowned for its “Unfinished Church”, the remains of early Christian buildings, and the traces of a monastic community that shaped the religious life of the region for centuries.



Figure 1. Abbey of the Holy Trinity (Venosa)

Leaving the town of Horace behind, the route opens out into the countryside, where the profile of Monte Vulture appears on the horizon, accompanying the walker along panoramic, pale gravel roads.

The path crosses a rural landscape shaped by wheat fields, olive groves and vineyards, following gentle undulations that lead to the of the Madonna of the Wood “La Gloriosa” within a green and silent area, the sanctuary is a place of deep popular devotion. According to tradition, the Virgin appeared here in the sixteenth century to a young shepherdess, and since then the site has been a destination for pilgrimages and religious celebrations that continue to animate the life of the local community.

Surrounded by centuries-old trees, the complex preserves an atmosphere of contemplation and peace. Each year, on the occasion of the patronal feast, the faithful of Montemilone and neighbouring villages reach the sanctuary on foot, in a pilgrimage repeated over the centuries. From the sanctuary, the walk continues towards Montemilone, along country roads and wide horizons stretching as far as the border with Apulia. The journey ends in the historic centre of the village, dominated by the Mother Church of Saint Stephen, the final destination of the route. Dating back to the twelfth century, the church is one of the most important religious buildings in the area: its interior preserves Baroque altars, an ancient wooden organ and fine sacred paintings, reflecting the deep devotion of the Montemilone community.



Figure 2. Sanctuary of the Madonna of the Wood "La Gloriosa" (Montemilone)



Figure 3. Mother Church of Saint Stephen (Montemilone)

The village, with its narrow stone lanes and quiet little squares, offers authentic glimpses of the simplicity and beauty of Lucanian rural life.

The route from Venosa to Montemilone is more than a hiking route: it is a path of faith and tradition, linking two emblematic sites of spirituality in the Vulture–Melfese area. From the monumentality of the abbey in Venosa to the tranquillity of the rural sanctuary, and finally to the solemn Mother Church of Montemilone, each stage represents an encounter with history and popular devotion.

It is an ideal journey for those seeking the value of slow pilgrimage, a deep connection with nature, and the profound spiritual identity of a land that has preserved the voice of its paths for centuries.