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## Tunnels with an Impact

June 17, 2019



It's rare to return to the same country for a world congress, but in Italy, three times can be a charm—especially when you're combining the archeologically rich city of Naples with a community of worldwide experts on design and construction of underground works, such as the [International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association \(ITA-AITES\)](#) and the [Italian Tunnelling Association \(SIG\)](#).

For the [World Tunnel Congress 2019 \(WTC 2019\)](#), which took place in May, Naples proved to be the perfect “cultural mixture” of archaeology, architecture and art—themes that were highlighted in both the programme and congress title: Tunnels and Underground Cities: Engineering and Innovation meet Archaeology, Architecture and Art.

Over 2,700 attendees from more than 70 countries gathered to hear more than 180 oral presentations at the [Mostra D'Oltremare Congress Center](#), where exhibitor numbers were up by more than 50 percent. Not only was attendance at a record high—up by 80 percent—engagement on social media was strong, with 280,000 post views. According to Rosangela Quietì, managing director, Congress Division at [AIM Group International](#), *“The rich and personalised programme, along with the appeal of the destination, are the main reasons for the boost in attendance.”*

Exploring tunnels 40 metres below the historic centre of Naples and sitting at a seaside archaeological site for lunch were just the start to the WTC 2019. In addition to Tripe A sessions on Archaeology, Architecture and Art, delegates had the opportunity to head off-site and see local tunnel projects like the Greek-Roman tunnelling system, the recently restored Renaissance aqueduct system in the Galleria Borbonica, and the city's award-winning Metro station. Attendees were also able to visit a few other significant Italian projects like Rome's Metro construction site, the high-speed railway Naples-Bari, and the Brenner Base Tunnel, the world's longest underground railway tunnel.

The destination played a centrepiece role in the congress, and each locale was chosen to highlight a specific aspect of the city's culture in a way that relates to the congress's overall theme. Lunches were held at the archaeological Pausilypon site of Seiano Caves, and attendees hopped on a historical train ride to reach the Gala Dinner, which was hosted at the Pietrarsa Railway Museum. Millennials were also given a great networking opportunity at a cocktail party dedicated to under-35 members, held on board a historic galleon at the Mergellina harbour.

Another notable new addition to the event was WTC's participation in a Food for Good programme, which recovered and donated excess food to local charity organisations like family homes, soup kitchens and refugee centres. WTC2019 also chose to support the not-for-profit Arché Foundation as a charity partner, which will have a long-term impact on the local community. The main project will include building a community house with 14 flats designed for mothers in need and their children. *“In line with the choice to establish a strong link with the destination, for this edition, for the first time, it was decided to leave a legacy on the destination and support local causes,”* Quietì says. *“Like tunnels help to overcome difficult roads, Arché's projects help people to overcome difficult times and find an easier path for their lives.”*

This article was written by Boardroom Editor [Lane Nieset](#). The right to use, part or all of it in subsequent works has to be granted by the Publisher.

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