A highly distinctive edition with topics, activities and powerful content with a link to the destination and the local professional community. The innovative programme attracted a record number of attendees, a rich scientific program and an increase in exhibitors.

CLIENT CHALLENGE

The World Tunnel Congress is a major international conference organised by the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association (ITA-AITES) and the Italian Tunnelling Association (SIG). It gathers the most renowned worldwide experts on design and construction of underground works, focusing on tunnelling, engineering and innovation.

This edition’s event goals were to:
✓ combine knowledge sharing and innovative formats,
✓ enrich the programme, blending traditional topics with unusual ones,
✓ give a strong connection to the destination and the local professional community.
Naples was the third Italian city ever chosen for the World Tunnel Congress, Florence hosted the event in 1986 and Milan in 2001. Returning to the same country is quite rare for such a world congress. The bid to host the congress in Naples was jointly managed from the beginning by SIG and AIM Group International. The proposal to establish a strong connection with the destination and build around it a personalised, innovative, scientific congress programme was one of the key differentiators of the Naples bid which enabled the organisers to add value to the congress’ history.

A particular “cultural mixture” was one of the event’s stand out features. Engineering-related topics were combined with typical elements of Italian culture, such as Archaeology, Architecture and Art, which are themes very evident in Naples. This allowed us to create a unique blend from the technical world of engineers and geotechnics with other disciplines, as exemplified in the congress title: Tunnels and Underground Cities: Engineering and Innovation meet Archeology, Architecture and Art.
A smart approach that enabled AIM Group International, as appointed Professional Congress Organiser, to manage a complex event. The team made it possible that the social programme had engaging, scientific sessions coupled with exclusive experiences in unique locations.

The World Tunnel Congress had some signature features:

✓ The innovative programme. This edition programme was unprecedented as it highlighted the multiple connections among the tunneling world and other disciplines considered so far unrelated, particularly with the inclusion of the Triple A sessions - Archaeology, Architecture and Art. The scientific agenda was very rich: 750 papers were received and about 180 oral presentations were presented during the week. The e-poster digital area and a dedicated app allowed delegates find and read content as well as arrange appointments with the authors.

✓ Off-site Events and Technical Visits. Delegates have been involved in a series of off-site events and technical visits to some of the local significant tunnel projects: the Greek-Roman tunnelling system, the underneath itinerary of the just-restored Galleria Borbonica and the award-winning Metro station in Naples, which combines art, architecture and tunnel engineering. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity to visit other interesting Italian projects such as Rome’s Metro construction site, the high-speed railway Naples-Bari and even the Brenner Base Tunnel, the longest underground railway tunnel in the world!

✓ Outstanding social moments with a truly local taste. Some working lunches were organised at the remarkable archaeological Paulypon site of Seiano Caves; the Gala Dinner was hosted at the Pietrarsa Railway Museum, with delegates reaching it on an historical train; a special concert was organised at the prestigious San Carlo Theatre; a cocktail party dedicated to young under-35 members was organised on board of an historic galleon at Mergellina harbour. These were just a few of the unique and immersive experiences delegates could live!

✓ Local community partners. WTC chose to support the local not-for-profit Arché Foundation and specifically supported its project of building a community house to host mothers in need with their children. Like tunnels, Arché projects help people to overcome difficult times and find an easier path for their lives. Furthermore, WTC participated in a Food for Good Program and donated all the excess food to local charity organisations.
OUTCOMES

The congress ran very smoothly, participants were able to enrich their knowledge and networking, whilst discovering Naples at its best. The results achieved are just stunning: the number of attendees increased by 80% attracted by the rich scientific programme and the appeal of a renowned destination. Also the number of countries represented increased, surpassing 70 countries. The exhibitor numbers were boosted by more than 50%, attracted by the opportunity to present their services and products to such a huge gathering. The scientific programme also benefited from very active participation: 750 papers have been presented and 180 oral presentations were held at the congress (marking an increase of 27%).

Challenges for the next world event? Hitting the same level of attendance and enrich the programme with real Value!

THE WTC IN NUMBERS:

+80% 2,700 attendees
+70 Countries represented
2,500 sqm Of Exhibition Area
+57% 230 exhibitors and sponsors
280,000 post views on social media