Business travelers often take advantage of their temporary location to explore the local sights. Society members who attend the Annual Meeting have the opportunity to do the same—while expanding their knowledge and connections.

Divisions and communities sponsor professional tours to explore meeting surroundings. Tours may include research facilities, natural areas of interest, farms, stormwater treatment plants, mines, or produce distribution centers—any resource the local community offers. Local researchers on the tour are able to provide insights, and international participants bring new perspectives.

“We’ve found many scientists are isolated,” says Maxine Levin, chair of SSSA’s Urban and Anthropogenic Soils Division. Levin has more than 20 years of experience on tours as a participant or organizer. “This is an opportunity to really collaborate and talk together. Going on the field tours was my real opportunity to get to know other scientists on an equal basis, whether student, professor, or professional.”

Tour choices range from a few hours to a few days. There are 11 professional tours during the 2017 Annual Meeting with topics ranging from pedogenesis to wild crop relatives to citrus research. Similar to the Annual Meetings, the tours pull in scientists from around the globe. “I get to see the field conditions and practices that are used in another climatic zone.”

Tours take advantage of unique facilities near the Annual Meeting location. A 2016 tour included a full morning at Biosphere 2 in Arizona, including a presentation on current research.