

FAIR IN INDIA

1. Sonepur is a place in **1 the north-east** of India
2. On the way to the fair, the speaker saw women wearing bracelets made of **2 glass**
3. The fair lasts for almost **3 a month** each year.
4. At the fair, there are people who specialise in checking the elephants' **4 teeth**
5. Traditionally, the elephants stand in a special area near to the **5 river**
6. There used to be hundreds of elephants at the fair, but now their number has gone down to about **6 70**
7. Behind the elephant area there is a very large **7 tent** which belongs to a theatre.
8. Around lunchtime the speaker started feeling **8 hungry** at the sight of all the food
9. and so she decided to buy some perfectly cooked **9 rice** for her lunch.
10. Expensive goods made out of **10 leather** can be bought at the fair.
11. The speaker saw that large numbers of **11 cows** were being sold at the back of the fairground.
12. It is traditional at an Indian **12 wedding** for the man to ride a white horse.
13. The speaker returns to the elephant area because she wants to get **13 taxi** and go back to the hotel.

Listen again and fill in the gaps

I had always wanted to visit one of the famous animal fairs that are held throughout India. So I was delighted **when I was asked to go to** India and report on one for this programme. The fair I was going to look at was at a place called Sonepur, which is in the north-east of India.

To get there I had to take two planes and then take **a short taxi ride**. As my taxi approached the place where the fair was being held, it was obvious something special was going on. The passengers in the other three-wheeler taxis were all dressed **in their very best clothes**, some made of silver and gold cloth, the women with their arms covered in glass bracelets.

As I got nearer to the fairground **I spotted** my first elephant – only it was not walking to the fair, but was being transported in the truck up ahead. Sonepur is famed for its fair, **held once a year**. It usually begins in the third week in November and for nearly a month the elephants are displayed and traded, prices agreed upon and periodic **maintenance** carried out by experienced elephant keepers – there are even specialists **on hand** to look at the elephants' teeth.

And it is the elephants you see first, once you have made it through the crowds of people and taxis. They stand motionless or swaying **from foot to foot**, their foreheads and ears and trunks covered in floral or geometric tattoos. Their privileged position – closest to the river – is part of an ancient tradition. The origins of this fair go back many years, and while the number of elephants has fallen **from several hundred** to around 70, they still make an impressive assembly.

At the back of the elephant area is the enormous tent of a travelling theatre, surrounded by side-shows and fairground stalls. Behind these are rows of shops **selling tea and soft drinks**.

As for food, there was no end of choice. I could see mounds of brightly coloured fruit and **fresh baked bread**.

It was nearly lunchtime and all this food made me feel hungry. I looked up and down the rows until I found a man expertly cooking rice, which tasted **as good as it looked**.

I was beginning to appreciate the size of this fair. It was as if a city had grown out of the soil. Different alleyways sold everything that a farmer who had sold his crop could wish to **spend his money on**, from costly leather goods to cheap embroidered cloth.

I climbed a small hill to regain my sense of direction and was amazed to see that behind the fairground was an open plain, full, **as far as the eye could see**, of cows.

There were thousands of them and there was some serious business going on in the viewing areas.

From there, I moved on to the Horse Fair in another clearly defined area. The dealers sat patiently waiting for customers. Families would come, each looking for a white horse **for their son to ride at his wedding**, which is a custom of this country. These horses were wearing saddles and bridles richly decorated with silver and gold and were kept safe in the dealers' tents. Outside, some of the younger horse-dealers were **watering** their horses while others showed off their riding skills, leaning far back in the saddle or standing up as they moved from a trot to a gallop.

By now the sun had lost its earlier intensity and smoke had begun to rise **from the campfires**. I decided it was time to leave, so I wandered back to the elephant area where I knew I could find a taxi to take me back to my hotel. For me, it had been a wonderful experience.

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