

The Yum List



Taura Khongsat – Just Love Experience Chiang Mai

Taura Khongsat, Co-Owner of Just Love Experience (motorbike food tour)

In this interview, Taura Khongsat, Co-Owner of **Just Love Experience** (motorbike food tour), shares how the business started and some insights into the food scene in Chiang Mai.

What do you do?

I am the creative director of Just Love Experience, wife of Pek (co-owner of Just Love Experience), and mother to Mali. My work responsibilities include a bit of everything from program research and planning (going on adventures, connecting with locals and eating lots of incredible food), storytelling, community outreach, communication, and marketing. I also hold the very important role of **Team Sanuk** captain, ensuring that joy is at the forefront of our business.

How did you get into the industry?

Throughout my fifteen-year career in international teaching, travel was at the forefront of my life. In those beginning years, I met my husband Pek, and he really opened my eyes to adventure and authentic Thai food. As we went on to live in and travel to different countries, food experiences led us to connect with people and places on a different level. My love of food flourished! During our time living abroad, we always sensed a need to get back to the city we love, Chiang Mai. While teaching was my passion for many years, I felt a desire to try something new to feed my creative soul. With Pek's previous experience in the tourism industry, my skills from teaching and our combined love for adventure and food, we knew we should create an experience for tourists in Chiang Mai that would highlight what we love about the city. The Just Love Experience motorbike food tour became a reality over many meals, drinks, and long off-road car rides!

What food memory from your travels stands out?

Many years ago, I went to Bangkok with my husband for a weekend. One night during rush hour, we stumbled upon a small Issan street food cart outside our hotel near On Nut station. The BBQ smoke filled the air as we walked by; it was busy with locals, and we were hungry. We sat down at the roadside table with red plastic chairs, ordered the Issan staples, which included laap, nam tok, som tam, tom sep and sticky rice. As soon as the food was brought to the table, we knew it was the real deal. This meal was simply PERFECTION – spicy, sour, salty and sweet! We intentionally planned stopovers in Bangkok for many years afterwards so that we could experience this incredible meal again. I became known as the 'farang' who ordered two of everything because one just wasn't enough. Sadly, this food cart closed down during the pandemic.

What's the best/ worst part of your job?

Best: The best part of this job is that I get to spend more time with my family, and there is no limit to creativity. I also love meeting people from around the world and connecting over a shared love of travel, food and 'sanuk' experiences.

Worst: The worst part of this job is the screen time requirements.

What's one of your favourite food and beverage pairings?

I am a baker at heart, so I'm drawn to share a sweet treat. 😊 I LOVE a salted chocolate chip cookie dipped into a hot latte.

What's one of the most incredible things you've seen behind the scenes?

As we plan to expand our business, we are always looking for special experiences to share with customers. Recently, our family went on an adventure into the mountains not far from Chiang Mai to build connections with a local Karen hill tribe community. We spent the night in a small bungalow surrounded by beautiful rice paddies on the top of a mountain. We had delicious homemade food delivered to us, watched the sky full of stars, and woke up above the clouds. I woke up feeling grateful for this path we have chosen with Just Love Experience that allows us to connect with the beauty of Thailand.

The perfect day off would be...

Going on an adventure to somewhere new with my family, stopping for many roadside snacks, time for a massage or a nap and having delicious meals.

OR

Jet setting to a different country to see loved ones!

A day in the life of Taura Khongsat is...

Usually, it's a slow start, having morning coffee while checking emails and social media. We typically have breakfast together as a family and then have a quick check-in about tours and to-do lists. I often do a bit of baking for my side business, Just Love Sugar, and then head off to have lunch at a local market. Afternoons are spent going on adventures with my daughter or working in a cafe. Some nights, I join tours to connect with our customers and capture the experience.

What does Taura Khongsat do for fun?

I am a traveller at heart, always trying to find new places to visit and foods to try. My daughter is quite the adventurous child, and we have been going on some pretty incredible adventures recently! I also love to host gatherings, celebrate loved ones, and bake delicious sweet treats. I am quite the creative soul and usually have lots of projects going on around the house.

What's something you'd like guests to know about Just Love Experience?

Just Love Experience has been a growing vision for many years. It is about believing in following dreams and always seeking joy.

Our mission is held up by five pillars: *Experience, Connection, Community, Sanuk and Story*. We strive to weave these into everything we do as we create unique'

sanuk' experiences for people to connect to culture, creativity and communities. The name 'Just Love' comes from my father, who was a successful musician known as Just Love Music. When Pek and I decided to start this business, we felt that 'Just Love' held our vision perfectly. It is a constant reminder to choose love, joy and kindness. Tours are just one part of the Just Love Experience vision. Have a look at our website to find out more about Sugar, Flourish, Events, and Lifestyle!

How have you grown in your profession? What are your key learnings from your start in the industry until now? Any misconceptions?

While being an international teacher for fifteen years, I gained skills in creativity, leadership, organization, time management and communication. These skills have been beneficial as I transitioned into a business owner, allowing me to develop strategies, systems and goals for our business.

I took a business course last year, which helped shift my mindset from education to business, allowing me to really focus on being intentional with my time and energy. While I knew it would take time to develop our business, I have learned to celebrate the small successes so that we can acknowledge how far we've come.

What's something you'd like people to know about being a tour business owner as a profession?

While it is very rewarding and empowering to have your own business, boundaries and routines have helped in supporting my wellbeing. It is easy to work at all hours of the day, but it is okay to set limits to work hours. Also, I am a true believer in being different. It is important to try and do something different

from what others are doing. While it can be scary, taking a chance can be very rewarding. We at Just Love Experience are building a brand that is unique!

Taura Khongsat's view on the tourism scene in Chiang Mai?

Chiang Mai is a very special city, offering diversity in experiences such as lively markets, food, art, and nature. There are a lot of tour companies in Chiang Mai to provide for all of the tourists, however, many tour companies offer similar tours. We are committed to creating a different kind of experience that is unique and hope that our customers will leave remembering the experience for a lifetime.

What practices do you currently implement or hope to implement to work towards social responsibility and sustainability in the future?

We have intentionally chosen to work with long-standing, family-run businesses for our motorbike food tour, allowing us to give back to local community members. We also employ university students who are studying English as a major and hope to empower them to build confidence through experiences with tourists as they create a path for their future.

We are currently developing relationships with farmers to better understand where food is sourced and hope to partner with local organizations to create opportunities for tourists to make connections during their time in Thailand.

We are working on limiting or removing plastics from our tour and also working on developing a program to cater to vegetarians in the near future.

What can guests look forward to in the upcoming months?

Guests can look forward to lots of Thai food content and a few adventures mixed in. We plan to highlight the food vendors on our tours, learning the stories of their families and food. Stay tuned!

Read more interviews similar to this one with Taura Khongsat [here](#), and stay updated with the latest gourmet and travel recommendations [here](#) and [here](#).