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Editor's Note: This is the original Okinawa Hai post on Gakiya's Obi & Kimono Shop. We published a newer post on this establishment in 2016. We've left all of your original comments in place on this post, but we thought you might want a fresher take on the place.

CONTRIBUTED BY JOELLE YAMADA

Isn't it great how things grow on you over time?

When I arrived on island, there were two specific things that I found to be... well... garish and overdone: All of the toenails of the women I seemed to meet and all of the crazily colorful obi that were proudly hanging in people's homes.

Fast forward three years, and I can't imagine going too long between visits to Cocok's or other talented nail artists to see what crazy pedicure design I can get next. And high on my list of "last things to buy" were some seasonal obi for *the* wall (I use *the* term loosely as I have no clue what my next wall will be like). The idea for seasonal obi came from my friend, Michelle, who PCS'd last year and introduced me to this lovely shop outside Gate 2.



She decided she couldn't just pick one fabric, so instead chose an obi design for each of the seasons of the year. This allowed her to have some brightly colored and some more muted designs, and of course, the requisite Christmas obi, of which this shop has many.



I was concerned I'd be overwhelmed, as stores like this can often cause me to go into an ADD-like state, but it was really fun. Along with all the necessary items for dressing in Kimono (from the tip of your head to your garishly painted toes), Gakiya's Obi & Kimono Shop has a wide selection of obi in several sizes and a multitude of styles.



I found myself enjoying sorting through the stacks of fabric and just waiting until one grabbed my attention. I had too many to choose from in the end and vowed I'd come back SOON to pick and purchase.



It took a year. But with my own PCS looming, I finally got back to the store a few weeks ago and was greeted again by Kimie's smiling face and exquisite English. She helped when I needed it, but left me to sift through the designs peacefully. When I'd narrowed down the choices, she began to pull chords that brought out the colors more fully and explained how the obi could be tied. It felt a little like working with an interior designer who just *knows* what pillows would look best on *that* couch. She has obviously been helping customers and enjoying these designs for years.





I couldn't turn down a beautiful bingata design which took me a little outside my initial price planning, so I ended up just choosing three, instead of the seasonal four -- but I had a blast and can't wait to find a wall to place my new treasures on.

Enviously, I glanced through pictures of former customers dressed in their beautiful kimono and found myself hoping I'd get to come back to Okinawa someday with my little girl. I can only imagine how fun it might be to get dressed up together in traditional kimono for some photos. Someday.

The obi were ready just a few days later for pick up and I'm thrilled with how they turned out. Prices started at around \$60 and there are additional charges for the chords chosen. Including the more expensive bingata, I paid just under \$300 for my three choices.



I know that after all the PCS craziness dies away in a few months, I'll enjoy walking into a room on the other side of the world and experiencing the rush of feelings that always come from seeing something special from a place you've known, loved and left behind.