While people have been coming to the Zao’s onsen for over a thousand years, the first ski resort opened on the mountain in 1925. One of the first resorts in Japan, Zao became popular for its beautiful powdery slopes of varying difficulty and for the Snow Monsters on the summit. The mountain is also home to some of Japan’s first ski lifts, the first of which was constructed in 1951. In all, Zao ski resort is equipped with over forty distinct trails and forty-one cable cars, ropeways, and ski lifts.

When you are on the mountain, please be aware that there are several kinds of trails with several levels of difficulty: Green trails are the lowest difficulty, easiest to access and to ski down. Red trails are intermediate and are intended for skiers of average ability. Black trails are for experts. Zao also has a competition-certified course, and night skiing is possible within certain areas of the mountain.

Please be aware that while the team at Zao wants every visitor to have the experience of a lifetime, the slopes are subject to certain rules: smoking is prohibited on all parts of the mountain, and regardless of your backcountry skiing experience, Zao is not a backcountry ski area. Do not go off-trail. Areas that look safe for off-piste skiing are likely to contain dangerous ravines. The ropeways and lifts are numbered and marked with multilingual signage. If you have any problems, Zao has a first-aid station and five ski patrol posts.