

The Four Seasons of Oze

The seasons in Oze are distinct, and many repeat visitors come at different times of the year in order to experience its seasonal highlights.

Spring

Spring comes late in Oze, with the snow beginning to melt in early May. The Visitor Centers begin operations, and the mountain huts are dug out from under the snow and start accepting visitors. Late May to mid-June is the season of the *mizubasho*, or Asian skunk cabbage, which brightens the marshes with its white flowers, attracting large numbers of visitors. Later, marsh marigolds add their golden yellow hues to the landscape.

Summer

The summer season is when the mountains are most accessible and the basins most verdant. In July the marshes turn white with the fluff of cottonsedge (*eriphorum*), then shift to bright yellow when the day lilies bloom later in the month. This is the peak of Oze's floral (and tourist) season. Hikers come to climb the many peaks and casual visitors come to enjoy the scenery from the boardwalks that traverse the marshes.

Autumn

The climate turns cooler in late August as autumn comes to Oze, and animals begin preparing for a long winter hibernation. The foliage begins to change color in September, when the marsh grasses and other vegetation turn to autumn gold. Later in the month, trees on the mountainsides like maple and beech turn bright red, yellow and brown. Snow begins to fall in October, and by November has accumulated into deep drifts, making the park largely inaccessible until spring.

Winter

The snowfalls that begin in mid-October eventually turn all of Oze into deep snow country. The park staff and mountain huts prepare the facilities to survive the elements, then leave for the winter period. The snow layer, which can reach depths of 3 to 4 meters in parts of the park, plays a big part in maintaining the Oze's ecosystem, protecting the plants from the bitter winds of mid-winter and nourishing the growth of new sprouts as snowmelt in late spring.