



An Aborigine hut



An Orang Asli man fishing

## THE DRAGON OF LAKE CHINI

The true enchantment of Lake Chini lies in the secrets lurking beneath its surface. One legend relates to an ancient mighty Khmer city, as magnificent as the Angkor Watt in Cambodia, which reputedly lies on the bottom of the lake. Interestingly, linguists claim to have established remarkable resemblance between Thai and *Orang Asli Jakun* (Aborigines of *Jakun* tribe) languages. For example in Thai, the word 'Chini' means gibbons, and until today the lake's forest is still home to many of these long-limbed carefree primates. Still, the most celebrated of Chini's legends is the lake's numinous sentinel the iron-scaled and mighty *Naga Seri Gumum* (Seri Gumum Dragon).



A local crafting his canoe

Long time ago, the first *Jakun* people settled in Chini were skilled hunters and expert farmers. One day, as the *Jakun* settlers were clearing more area for cultivation, an old woman emerged from the forest declaring the recently cleared area was hers and that the *Jakun* men were greedy because they have taken more than they should. In claiming her rights, the mysterious old woman planted her walking stick into the ground and warned the men never to remove it. Swiftly and humbly they apologised, and the elderly woman allowed them to continue working so long as they did not infringe on her area again.

Days later, the dogs started to bark angrily at a mossy-coloured log-like shape near the forbidden area. The *Jakun* men went to check out the excitement. One of the men hurled his stick at the log and it started to move and bleed. All of them stood in shock, as deep red blood kept gushing out. As they watched, the sky above darkened, lightning pierced the land and deafening thunders stifled their horrified screams. In panic, one of the men knocked over the old woman's walking stick and a fountain of water shot sky high. For years the water gushed, forming the lakes, which now has become the dwelling of *Naga Seri Gumum* that was transformed from the magical log.

Located 100 kilometres away from Kuantan, Lake Chini is a humbling place, offering numerous inspirations to its visitors. Its refreshingly lush background is home to exotic equatorial flora and fauna that will astound and educate. From late June to January, the lake's surface is teeming with stunning pink and white lotuses, yielding a mesmerising contrast to its verdant setting. There are also more than 200 species of birds recorded around the area, making Lake Chini one of the premier bird watching locations in Peninsular Malaysia. The monsoon season swells the lake, making it the best time for anglers to try their luck at the 144 species of fishes living in the lake. It is also a fantastic time to enjoy the lake in its entirety, via a boat ride for a unique lake safari experience.



Lotus in bloom