The Klein River

The Klein River originates as the Hartebees River, 300 metres above mean average sea level on the northern slopes of the Kleinriver Mountain range. The catchment divide between the headwaters of the Onrus River (flowing west) and the Hartebees/Klein River (flowing east) is clearly visible when traveling along the Hermel-en-Aarde road from Hermanus to Caledon (on the farm Diepgat).

From the confluence of the Hartebees and Klein Rivers (refer to map), the river is officially known as the Klein River. Three other rivers flow into the Klein River before it curves south and then west to flow into the Atlantic Ocean at the Klein River lagoon. Although the Klein River is 80 km long, it is the river with the shortest distance between its origin and mouth in the world (5 km as the crow flies)!

The highest mountains in the catchment area of the Klein River are Babylonstoring (1 167 m) and Maanschynkop (963 m). The mountainous catchment area of the Hartebees River (120 km²) contributes a considerable volume of water to the river system (approximately 23.3%). This flow is of paramount importance to farmers who rely on the Klein River for irrigation farming. However, a significant portion of the flow (30% of the Klein River flow) is generated from the southern flanks of the Klein River Mountains between Wagenboomsdrift (Akkedisbergkloof) and Aasvoëlkop (located in the Vogelgat catchment) – a catchment area of approximately 100 km².

The latter is crucial to the ecological functioning of the estuary since this high quality water is injected in the system close to the estuary, where it is needed for the ecological functioning of this sensitive ecosystem. The entire catchment area of the Klein River and its tributaries comprises 980 km². From the Stanford road bridge (R43) the Klein River meanders for 6 km before it reaches the neck of the lagoon, where there is a wonderful proclaimed bird sanctuary.

The Klein River Lagoon, also referred to as “Kleinriversvlei”, is about 10 kilometers long and just over 2 kilometers wide at its widest point. The lagoon is environmentally sensitive and the management of the mouth area has seen extensive contention amongst stakeholders about the level and position where it should be artificially breached – if at all – every year.

Content courtesy of Stanford Tourism Bureau