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9 JULY 2008

GP2 SERIES Magny-Cours//Silverstone



Nico Rosberg

Read Nico's thoughts
on the GP2 season
so far in an e-zine
exclusive

Pantano on a flier

Back-to-back feature
race wins put Giorgio
Pantano clear at the top

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PANTANO Q&A
GIORGIO ON HIS GP2 CAREER

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Rosberg reviews

Champion in GP2's inaugural season, Nico Rosberg was the first GP2 driver to make the step up to Formula 1. Now in his third year with the Williams F1 team, Nico exclusively reviews GP2 Series '08 and reveals who he thinks could break into F1.

I still follow all the GP2 races, mainly because I remember how competitive the racing was in my time and it is still just as exciting today. There is a lot going on during a race and always a lot of overtaking. In a way it's more how Formula 1 should be.

So far this season has been fantastic, so unpredictable and a lot of fun to watch. The wins and the points have been unexpectedly distributed, and it's really all over the place at the moment!

Pantano's time to shine

It's not clear this year who the favourite for the title is but Giorgio Pantano has to be up there, he's a very talented driver and used to be my hero when I was racing go-karts. I remember having a poster of him on my wall which my dad bought for me.

This is now his fourth season in GP2 and I think that after more than 100 GP2 starts it should be his time to win it. His main competition will probably be from Bruno Senna and Romain Grosjean, but there are a lot of quick drivers this year. Pastor Maldonado and Andreas Zuber, are very fast if a little inconsistent. Sebastien Buemi and Luca Filippi have the pace to win races but Senna and Grosjean have stood out.

Making the step to F1

Meanwhile, the leading teams, ART and iSport, are the same as when I was racing GP2 in 2005, but there have been many different race winners this year and outfits like Piquet Sports, Arden, Super Nova, and Racing Engineering also look good.

Every year we've seen very strong drivers in GP2, and every year we've seen guys come through from GP2 into topline F1 drives. This season will be no different and I would say that the best potential candidates at this stage are Grosjean and Senna.

If you know how to drive a GP2 car fast, then you'll be fast in F1, for sure. But even so, racing at the very top level requires an unbelievably different driving style. You have to be so alert all the time and capable of constantly adapting yourself, that's the main thing. Driving fast is not the issue; it's consistency, adapting fast, being aware of all the circumstances and happenings around you but not letting that drain you. That's how these guys can be successful if they make it to F1.



Williams F1 driver
Nico Rosberg



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WWW.GP2SERIES.COM

GP2 testing - What really happens

The GP2 teams spent two vital days at the Paul Ricard circuit this month for the only mid-season test of the year. All the teams put new front suspension parts and a fresh electronic package through their paces and investigated low aero configurations ahead of Spa and Monza. For the inside line on specifics though we caught up with the great and the good of GP2 and unearthed some surprisingly varied objectives...



Eric Boulier, DAMS

"We have two rookie drivers and before this test we'd had to make up our own conclusions regarding their driving styles.

So, the main purpose was to validate technical set ups specific to each driver and then work on their abilities for qualifying and race endurance – the type of things for which we never have time at race weekends. Globally, I'd suggest there's half a second still to find in this new car."



Ivone Pinton, Durango

"We chose to test with just one car as a sign of respect for our driver, Davide Valsecchi, who was still recovering from his Istanbul crash. So, it was a very unusual situation for us and we learnt something new in terms of the way that our engineers had to think and manage the entire test."



David Price, DPR

"It was difficult for Michael [Herck] to come straight out of a cast and do a test, so our first priority was to get him comfortable, as well as checking performance numbers. It is always worth having a midseason test to quantify what you've done, check performance levels, validate the data from the first test, evaluate wind tunnel numbers – especially this season, what with Asia, the new car, etc., the kick off was hectic."



Paolo Coloni, FMS International

"It was Marko's [Asmer] first time in a GP2 car so we focused on getting him up to speed. We managed to complete the deal very late in the day and he ended up borrowing Roldan Rodriguez' helmet, Adam Carroll's race suit, and I think Andy Soucek's gloves! It was also the first time we had a chance to test with Roldan. All in all, we paid a lot of attention to developing a team atmosphere. There is only so much we can do in testing, the rest is dependent on the driver. Once they get use to these different set ups, understand what is the fastest one to use, and adapt their style for qualifying as opposed to racing, it is all down to them."

GOOD MONTH



GIORGIO PANTANO

The Silverstone victory brought up back-to-back feature race wins for the 29-year-old, who has consistently shown his tail to this season's chasing pack. By the end of the Silverstone race weekend Bruno Senna had cut Pantano's championship lead by two points, but the Italian still has 11 more in his pocket.



LUCAS DI GRASSI

The kind of comeback Indiana Jones would be proud of, Di Grassi has bagged twenty-four points in two race weekends since returning to GP2 from a full-time F1 test seat. Last year's championship runner up has had limited time in the new car, but his return has already raised the bar in this year's GP2 Series.



TRUST TEAM ARDEN

A brave tyre choice in a damp Magny-Cours' sprint race, put Sébastien Buemi and Yelmer Buurman on the top two steps of the podium. Buemi followed up with a strong performance in Silverstone, lifting the team into fifth place and the talented Swiss driver into third.



DAMS

Luck deserted the French squad at Silverstone. Kobayashi's engine failed while he was running a strong fourth in the feature race, before he was taken out by BCN's Valles in race two.



FMS

Mid season and only just finalising their driver line-up. The Italian outfit will be hoping it's not too late to claw back a respectable championship finish.

BAD MONTH

Q&A GIORGIO PANTANO

Winner of the Istanbul, Magny-Cours and Silverstone feature races, Racing Engineering's Giorgio Pantano is 11 points clear at the top of the table. At 29 and in his fourth GP2 campaign he is also the closest thing the Series has to a veteran.

How does it feel to lead the championship for the first time in your four GP2 seasons? It feels great, but the championship has a long way to go. We need to wait and see what happens with Bruno [Senna] and Romain [Grosjean] – they have both been having a few mechanical

problems and that has been the main advantage for me. I believe this year's drivers' championship will come down to a competition between the three of us.

You are the only driver to win more than one feature race, why?

The team worked a lot with the downforce package, the suspension, and the wind tunnel early in the season and they've produced a very fast and reliable car. It's really a reliability issue.

How does this group of drivers compare to those in your other three seasons?

This year is more like year one [2005] – with half the drivers being so competitive and that's not just because of the new car.

So if you had to pick one, which of this year's drivers do you rate highly?

Grosjean. To be a rookie and start as quick as he has means he has the talent. OK, he might still need to develop a little more experience, but it's clear he has talent.



Giorgio Pantano's win in the Magny-Cours feature race was his third GP2 victory at the French circuit

[CLICK HERE FOR PANTANO'S PROFILE](#)

Vote for your best driver

Voting for the 2008 GP2 Series Best Driving Style Award is now open through the official GP2 website (<http://surveyor.caradisiac.com/index.php?sid=57>). The award recognises the GP2 pilot whose racecraft has most excited and impressed spectators. It is decided solely by public vote and the winner will be announced at the Winning Attitudes Awards (WAA) charity dinner on September 14.

Last year's winner and Renault F1 test driver Lucas di Grassi, recently returned to GP2 and immediately impressed in his first weekend back, claiming second and then fourth in the French round of the championship before landing a double podium at Silverstone.

Speaking after a typically stylish race to second place in France, Di Grassi explained: "I was expecting a strong comeback, but not as strong as second place. I think from this weekend it is nine months without racing since the last race in 07 so I was expecting to struggle."

Other awards up for grabs at the WAA event include Rookie Of The Year, Best Overtaking Manoeuvre and Best Engineered Team.



Last year's winner Lucas di Grassi racing in the wet at Silverstone

iSport leading tech race

iSport Racing is currently the team to beat in engineering terms according to Durango team principle Ivone Pinton.

Speaking during GP2's mid-season test at the Paul Ricard circuit in France, Pinton revealed that there is still a substantial amount of pace to find in the new GP2/08 car but it is iSport who are currently getting the most out of the machine.

"I reckon there is still a nice 15% of the potential to be exploited [from the race car]," explained Pinton. "Most of the teams are doing a very good job at getting the most they can out of this car, but to mention just one, I'd say iSport."

iSport is currently edging a very tight team championship. With 56 points the 2007 GP2 Series champion is just four points clear of Racing Engineering in second and 12 points ahead of third placed Piquet Sports.

Durango's own Davide Valsecchi returned to competition at the British round of GP2 Series after

missing the previous three with a back injury. The ex-WRS 3.5 driver was forced to miss the Turkish, Monte Carlo and French races but was delighted to be back behind the wheel at Silverstone, finishing 19th in the feature race and 6th in the sprint.

"At last," said Valsecchi after being given the all-clear by his medical team. "I've never wanted to get back behind the wheel of a racing car so much in my life. The layoff has been frustrating because in Istanbul, when the accident happened I was superfast."



An iSport mechanic works on one of the team cars



FROM THE
GP2SERIES.COM
BLOG

China gets GP2 Asia race

The first event of the 2008 GP2 Asia season will be a support race for the Chinese Grand Prix on October 18. Races at Sepang, Malaysia on April 4/5 and Sakhir, Bahrain on April 18/19 also coincide with F1 races.

Two stand-alone races in Dubai and one in Bahrain complete the line-up for 2008. Meanwhile the Sentul circuit in Indonesia has been dropped from the calendar. "There will be six rounds this season," explained GP2 Series Organiser Bruno Michel. "As promised three of them will coincide with Formula 1 races."

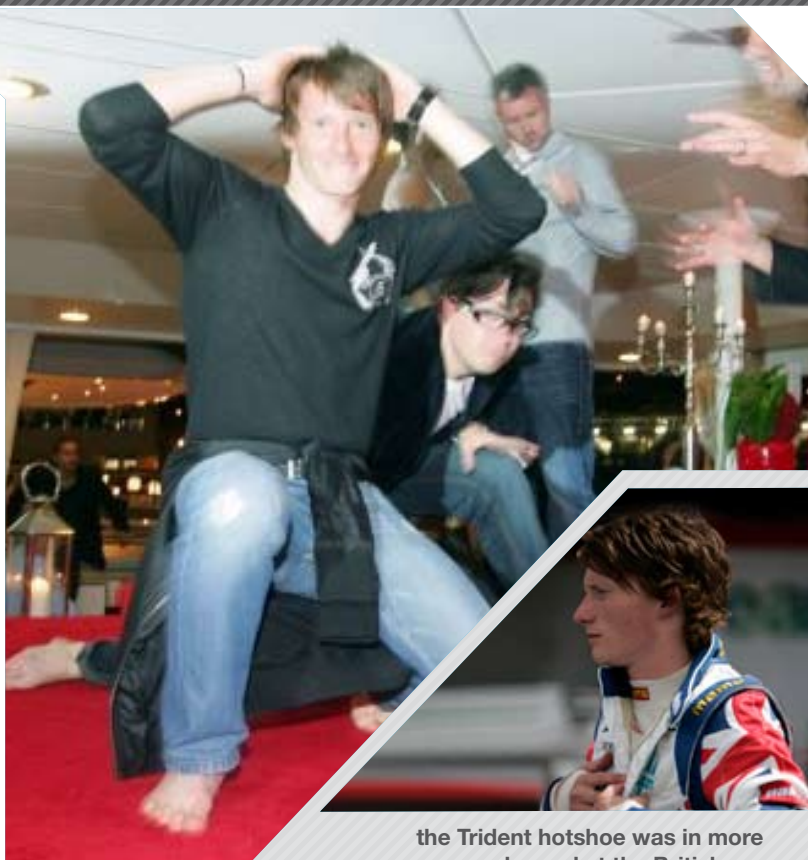
With the GP2 Series season scheduled to finish on September 16 teams will have less than a month before the GP2 Asia test at Shanghai on October 8/9.

To see the calendar in full visit www.gp2series.com/en//website/2008gp2series/news/newsgp2/newsdetail.php?articleid=1931

With five minutes left on the clock the pitlane was a pressure cooker. When the cars got back on track the pace was intense until Jerome D'Ambrosio ran wide and beached himself deep in the gravel: the resultant yellow flag meant the session was effectively over, with Bruno taking the top spot by just 0.014 from a very disappointed Grosjean and Pantano. It was later while I was getting everything ready for the press conference that I made my mistake: "Talk into this Giorgio," I asked as I handed him my wireless microphone, "I need to test the level." "She has a very nice bottom," he noted as he watched a girl walking across the room. "Can you hear me? Hello? My name is Giorgio: I'm a racing driver..." "I think I better have that mike back now." "No, you gave it to me so it is mine now..."

See blog.gp2series.caradisiac.com for more

PADDOCK PASS GP2 NEWS YOU CAN'T GET ANYWHERE ELSE



Thanks to the power of social networking websites we can bring you this shot of Trident Racing's Mike Conway (left) after his sprint race victory, partying how a Monaco race winner should – Russian dancing barefoot on a yacht, surrounded by red carpet. Ever the professional though,

the Trident hotshoe was in more reserved mood at the British round of the Series where he was sporting a rather natty set of Union Jack overalls for his home race. Now that Dance Master Mike has been spotted wearing a set, expect the patriotic all-in-one to be this summer's must-have piece of clubwear!



Our eagle-eyed snapper spotted Toyota F1 driver and reigning GP2 champion Timo Glock deep in conversation with a member of the iSport Team. If it was advice the seven-times GP2 race winner was giving out it certainly worked, as iSport left Silverstone with two podiums.



Valles' drive-on ferry will be anchored in the Valencia harbour

Any number of top-class drivers and team-owners can boast a yacht, they're as common as C-list celebrities on an F1 grid walk. So when BCN driver Adrian Valles was lining up his harbour accommodation for August's Valencia race, he decided to go one better and ended up with this monstrous ferry. Courtesy of one of his sponsors it comes complete with on-board parking, bragging rights and all the accommodation space one GP2 driver could need.

The manager of Karun Chandhok's local Indian restaurant has proudly unveiled "Karun's Special". The dish features on the Kushboo Curry House's menu and is based on Karun's own recipe. We tried out the spicy starter and while the Kushboo's cooking skills are undoubtedly their spelling needs work – according to the menu the dish has been test driven by Karun Chandos...



AWAY FROM THE TRACK

VITALY PETROV, WINGLESS FLYER

I'm a complete speed junkie and a real petrol head. I guess that's no surprise really for someone used to sitting centimetres from the road and going from 0-200km/h in about six seconds!

I love most things that move fast – jet skis, snow mobiles and any type of motorbike whether it's a road bike, dirt bike or a scooter. I live in Vyborg, close to the border of Finland so for me the snowmobile is the best because you can fall off and not get hurt!

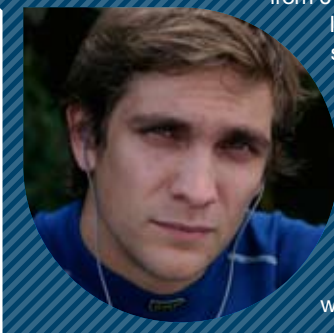
I used to have a collection of all these things when I was growing up but over time I think I destroyed everything! When I was younger I'd forget to mix the oil with the

fuel and within half an hour something would stop.

This isn't something I'd admit to my mechanics, they'd laugh if I told them all of the stories. But that was ten years ago and since then I've got a bit better on the engineering side!

Although I love speed the one thing I've never got over is my fear of flying. Seriously, I hate it. When you sit in a plane you can feel every small movement. When it's me I feel all these things happening, every change of angle or pitch and I want to be more in control. That's where the fear comes from – not being in control.

When I'm racing though I am in control so it doesn't matter how fast I am going, it is always great. Maybe once I learn to fly it could get better, but until then I'm a lot happier getting my speed fix fighting to the front of the GP2 pack!



[CLICK HERE FOR PETROV'S PROFILE](#)

RACE REPORTS



[CLICK HERE FOR RACE IMAGES](#)

Buemi leads Buurman in the French sprint race

FRANCE

MAGNY-COURS (June 21-22)



Pantano takes his second feature race while Trust Team Arden roll the dice and win a one-two

Giorgio Pantano of Racing Engineering won a French feature race of attrition after iSport's Bruno Senna and Romain Grosjean of ART both retired with mechanical failures while leading the 41 lap outing.

After qualifying on pole, Senna led comfortably for 10 laps of the Magny-Cours circuit before a clutch problem began to affect his pace, finally forcing him out on lap 22.

Pantano then set the fastest lap and closed quickly on Grosjean before a hydraulic problem stopped the Frenchman, handing victory to Pantano. Lucas di Grassi took second place on his GP2 return, ahead of Pastor Maldonado in third.

An equally eventful sprint race followed, in which Sébastien Buemi and Yelmer Buurman handed Trust Team Arden a well-deserved one-two finish. Starting from 21st and 12th on the grid, the pair gambled on using slick tyres in damp conditions. As the track dried Buurman picked his way to the front, before conceding the lead to Buemi and that's how the pair finished, ahead of Luca Filippi in third.

Feature race (41 laps)

- 1 Giorgio Pantano (Racing Eng.)
- 2 Lucas di Grassi (Campos)
- 3 Pastor Maldonado (Piquet)
- 4 Vitaly Petrov (Campos)
- 5 Andreas Zuber (Piquet)
- 6 Jérôme d'Ambrosio (Dams)
- 7 Karun Chandhok (iSport)
- 8 Mike Conway (Trident)

Fastest lap Giorgio Pantano
Pole position Bruno Senna

Sprint race (28 laps)

- 1 Sébastien Buemi (Arden)
- 2 Yelmer Buurman (Arden)
- 3 Luca Filippi (ART)
- 4 Lucas di Grassi (Campos)
- 5 Bruno Senna (iSport)
- 6 Mike Conway (Trident)
- 7 Pastor Maldonado (Piquet)
- 8 Andreas Zuber (Piquet)

Fastest lap Kamui Kobayashi
Pole position Mike Conway

GREAT BRITAIN

SILVERSTONE (JULY 5-6)



Another feature win for Pantano and sprint success for Senna keeps the title race tight

Racing Engineering's Giorgio Pantano continued to be the GP2 Series pace setter as he laid down a dominant win in race one at Silverstone.

The Italian started from fifth on the grid but drove a faultlessly measured race, ultimately passing Lucas di Grassi for the lead six laps from the end. Di Grassi held on to second, leading home Karun Chandhok in third.

Race one polesitter Bruno Senna made up for his sixth place feature finish by dashing to victory in a chaotic and water-logged sprint race.

By the time the chequered flag fell, the weather had claimed 11 of the 26 strong field, but the class of Senna, di Grassi and Pantano shone through in the rainy conditions and that's how the trio lined up on the podium.



[CLICK HERE FOR RACE IMAGES](#)

Giorgio Pantano celebrates his Silverstone feature race victory

Feature race (36 laps)

- 1 Giorgio Pantano (Racing Eng.)
- 2 Lucas di Grassi (Campos)
- 3 Karun Chandhok (iSport)
- 4 Sébastien Buemi (Arden)
- 5 Romain Grosjean (ART)
- 6 Bruno Senna (iSport)
- 7 Andreas Zuber (Piquet)
- 8 Luca Filippi (ART)

Fastest lap Giorgio Pantano
Pole position Bruno Senna

Sprint race (24 laps)

- 1 Bruno Senna (iSport)
- 2 Lucas di Grassi (Campos)
- 3 Giorgio Pantano (Racing Eng.)
- 4 Mike Conway (Trident)
- 5 Vitaly Petrov (Campos)
- 6 Davide Valsecchi (Durango)
- 7 Kamui Kobayashi (Dams)
- 8 Romain Grosjean (ART)

Fastest lap Pastor Maldonado
Pole position Luca Filippi

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL STANDINGS](#)

Drivers' points

- | | |
|-------------------|----|
| 1 Giorgio Pantano | 50 |
| 2 Bruno Senna | 39 |
| 3 Sébastien Buemi | 25 |
| 4 Lucas di Grassi | 24 |
| 5 Romain Grosjean | 23 |
| 6 Vitaly Petrov | 20 |
| 7 Álvaro Parente | 19 |
| 8 Karun Chandhok | 19 |

Teams' points

- | | |
|------------------------|----|
| 1 iSport International | 58 |
| 2 Racing Engineering | 53 |
| 3 Barwa Int. Campos | 45 |
| 4 Piquet Sports | 37 |
| 5 Trust Team Arden | 30 |
| 6 ART Grand Prix | 28 |
| 7 Trident Racing | 22 |
| 8 Super Nova Racing | 19 |

RACE PREVIEWS

HOCKENHEIM, GERMANY

A four-year veteran of Hockenheim, Arden's Sébastien Buemi explains where the German races might be won

Often maligned because of its remote location, the Hockenheim circuit itself can produce some fierce racing as drivers play chicken with their braking points on the way into the hairpin at the



Dates	19-20 July
Track length	4.574km (2.842 miles)
Race One	40 laps (19 July 4:00pm)
Race Two	27 laps (20 July 10:30am)
Website	www.hockenheimring.com

end of the long, quick parabolica. But, as well as good straight-line speed, the numerous slow and medium corners demand a balanced setup.

It's a track that Magny-Cours sprint race winner Sebastien Buemi knows well, having raced there in Formula BMW and F3 Euroseries.

"We should see a lot of overtaking at Hockenheim," explained Buemi. "I expect the passing will be in the same places as in F3. Turn two, then after the long straight into turn three and then finally in the Mercedes Arena.

"If you look at the first corner it's impressive, everybody speaks about it. It's really fast and very easy to go off and crash there. You need to carry a lot of speed into the corner but be aware that the curbs are really high and can pitch you into the barriers.

"It's going to be great to come back and drive GP2 here. I can't wait for the race, especially to see whether some of the corners we used to take flat in an F3 car can be done the same in GP2!"

EAT

The choice around Hockenheim is not great. However, in Neustadt, home of Keke Rosberg's DTM team, you'll find 'Rosengarten', a fun Italian restaurant.

STAY

Walkershof (<http://www.walkershof.com/flashindex.htm>). Unfortunately F1 teams manage to monopolise the only decent hotel within 20 square kms.

SEE

Hockenheim is no tourist hotspot so head to Heidelberg (30kms) for medieval streets, baroque architecture and romantic rooftop vistas.



Head to nearby Heidelberg for sightseeing

HUNGARORING, HUNGARY

Campos man Lucas di Grassi is eagerly anticipating the Hungaroring...and Budapest's post-race entertainment



Dates	2-3 August
Track length	4.381km (2.722 miles)
Race One	42 laps (2 Aug 4:00pm)
Race Two	28 laps (3 Aug 10:30am)
Website	www.hungaroring.hu

The Hungaroring has been part of the GP2 Series calendar since the championship started in 2005, and is a popular venue for its on and off track action.

After Monaco, the circuit has the lowest average speed of any GP2 venue. It's a tricky, technical track where the corners follow each other quickly and even the start finish straight is relatively short.

Despite the physical demands this puts on the drivers, Campos' Lucas di Grassi is a fan of the Hungaroring's twists and turns.

"The circuit is very nice," explains di Grassi. "One of the most technical layouts of the season. It's not very fast but it has a lot of different types of corners especially in sector two. And, despite what you might see in F1, in GP2 there are certain points where you can overtake.

"I have fond memories from last year's GP2 races - I was very competitive and lead race one for about 10 laps until the safety car came out and I eventually finished fourth. Likewise I finished fourth in race two."

After the remote Hockenheim race, nearby Budapest offers its own unique distractions.

"It is normally very hot when we race there,

but since I'm from a hot country it doesn't bother me too much," says the Brazilian. "However, there is an aquapark near the circuit and last year the top six drivers in the championship had a competition on the slides, which was great fun!

"I've been to Budapest two or three times already and have always had a great time - especially after the race because the city's nightlife is brilliant!"



Budapest's heroes square

EAT

The place to be seen is Tom George (V. Október 6 utca 8, Budapest, tel 1/266-3525) with a menu that stretches from France to Japan via India.

STAY

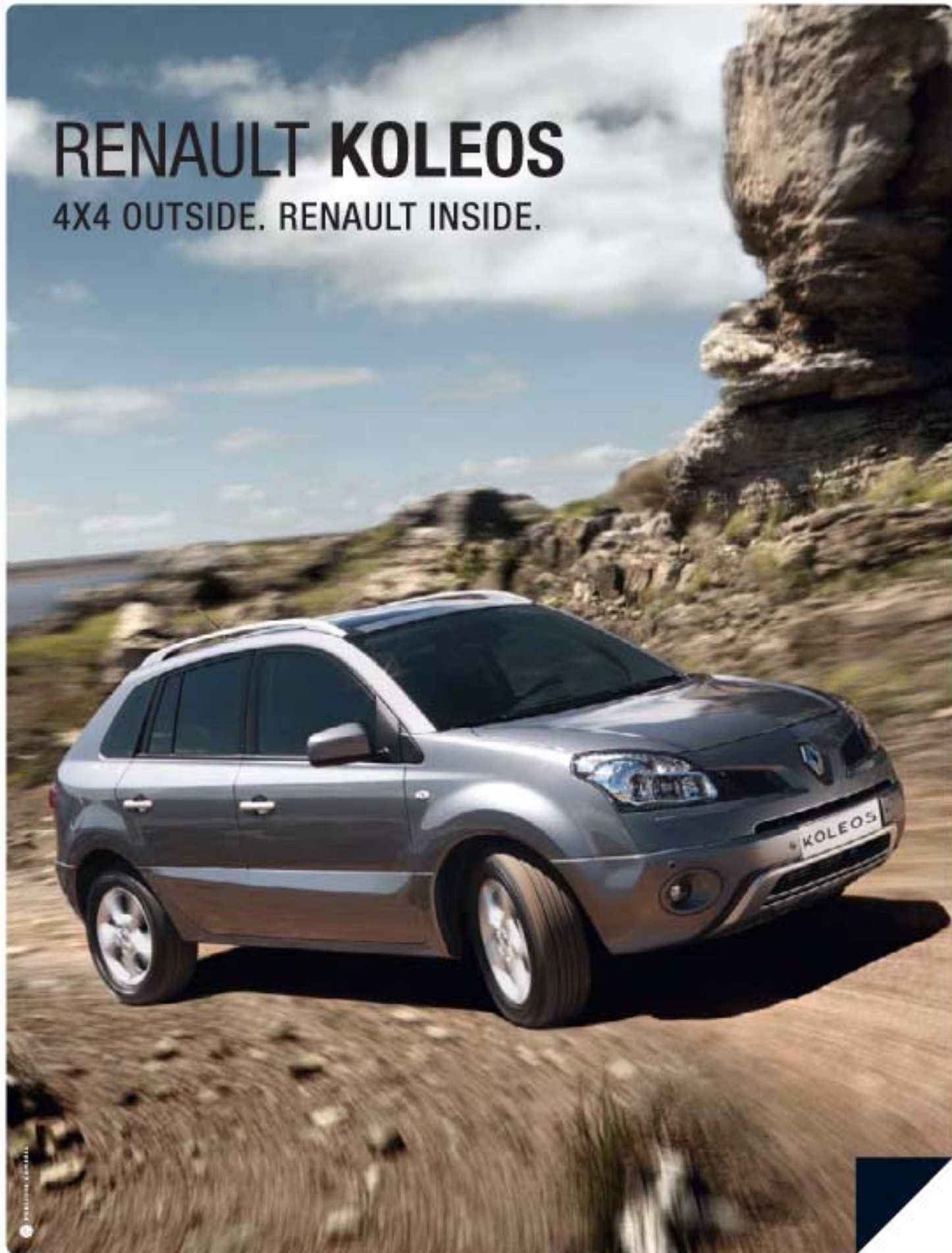
Four Seasons Gresham Palace (www.fourseasons.com/budapest) is one of the world's most spectacular hotels. But admittedly, even the Martini's are outside most budgets.

SEE

Try out the curative Széchenyi Baths (www.szechenzifurdo.hu), a beautiful turn of the century 15-pool complex located in City Park.

RENAULT KOLEOS

4X4 OUTSIDE. RENAULT INSIDE.



www.renault.com

Renault Koleos, also in 4x2. Fuel consumption figures min/max (l/100km): 7,2/9,9 - CO₂ Emissions min/max (g/km): 191/237. 

