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FT editors and guests pick their books of the year



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Tougher refugee deal at EU hands Merkel respite from crisis at home

◆ Greece and Spain to take back asylum seekers ◆ Coalition allies welcome harder stance

GUY CHAZAN AND ALEX BARKER
BRUSSELS

Angela Merkel has won a reprieve in the crisis that rocked her three-month-old government after her Bavarian coalition partners welcomed a tougher deal on migration agreed at yesterday's EU summit.

The German chancellor said she had concluded bilateral agreements with Greece and Spain that would allow Berlin to send refugees back to those countries if they had registered there.

Germany promised financial help in return, dropping its longstanding insistence that Greece raise sales tax on five Aegean islands – a condition of its international bailout that incensed Athens.

Ms Merkel refused to say whether the deals she had clinched in Brussels would be enough to allay her Bavarian critics



ing", while Manfred Weber, CSU's deputy chairman and leader of the European Parliament's main centre-right group, said the summit "took a big step towards a better migration policy".

EU leaders agreed that migrants rescued at sea should be held in closed facilities inside the union, where their asylum requests would be processed, and opened up the prospect of similar centres being established in Africa.

Crucially for Ms Merkel, they called for a crackdown on the movement of asylum seekers across the EU's internal borders – an issue that goes to the heart of the row imperilling her coalition.

The summit agreement reflects the hardening of views on migration in many EU member states, especially Italy, whose newly installed populist



Lehman on stage Making a drama out of the crisis

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Summer books The best reads for the beach and beyond — PAGES 8-11

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Making a drama out of the crisis

Shortcuts: from Champagne to Shanghai

Riviera Maya Back in 1976 the Mexican architect José Luis Moreno bought 500 acres of jungle and gone-to-wild coconut plantation 40km south of Cancún, abutting one of the most beautiful bays on Mexico's Caribbean seaboard. He named it Maroma — somersault in Spanish — and began to build what became one of the first luxury hotels, now the Belmond Maroma Resort & Spa, on this coast. It will face its first real local competition on September 10, when Chablé Maroma opens just beyond the bay's southern headland on a 180m-stretch of the same pale quartz sand. Under the management of locally based Hamak Hotels the development of 70 thatched suites (each with its own

pool) promises a 1,570 sq m spa and a restaurant (one of four) under the direction of Mexico's celebrated chef, Jorge Vallejo of Quintonil in Mexico City, which was ranked 22nd in the 2018 World's 50 Best Restaurants, announced



Chablé Maroma

last week. From about \$600 a night. www.chablesort.com

Champagne Between the villages of Champillon and Hautvillers, home of the abbey where Dom Pérignon is said to have invented champagne in 1693, the Champagne region's first contemporary five-star opens on July 6. The 49-room Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa is the creation of the team behind Le Barthélemy in St Barths. Rooms from €495. www.royalchampagne.com

Greece This year Greek tourism minister Elena Kountoura said she expected visitor arrivals to Greece to increase by 2m this year, driven in part by a

proliferation of new hotels. The past month has seen the opening of Katikies Mykonos (from €345) in the Cyclades, a sister property to the infinitely Instagrammable Katikies on Santorini. Skiathos, in the Sporades, has its first properly design-conscious new five-star in Elivi Skiathos, from €217. elivihotels.com

Shanghai Having opened in Beijing last year, the Italian jewellery and luxury goods brand Bulgari has opened a hotel in Shanghai, on the top eight floors of a 48-story tower designed by Antonio Citterio Patricia Viel, part of the Suhe Creek development in the Huangpu District. The hotel incorporates the city's former Chamber of Commerce, a

Neoclassical building dating back to 1916, which now houses its Chinese restaurant, Bao Li Xuan, while the Italian chef Niko Romito, whose Abruzzo restaurant has three Michelin stars, will oversee the restaurant. bulgarihotels.com



Inside the Hotel Stamba

Tbilisi For years the obvious place to stay in the Georgian capital was the Radisson Blu (for the views as much as everything). But then Rooms opened, launched by the locally based Adjara Group and the city's first design-conscious boutique. Last month Adjara opened a second property under the Rooms brand, Stamba. Centrally located in a landmark 1930s Brutalist building that began life as a Soviet-era publishing house and printworks, it has 42 spacious rooms (there'll be 150 eventually), as well as a rooftop, glass-bottomed swimming pool, a grand café and a five-storey atrium filled with trees. From €220. roomshotels.com/stamba-hotel

Claire Wrathall

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