

# The boy from Brazil

One of the world's most prolific authors, Paulo Coelho, 61, doesn't play by the book

**I**f I'm not travelling, I'll wake up in one of my houses in Geneva, Paris or Rio de Janeiro. My favourite is Rio de Janeiro. I wake at 9 or 9.30am normally, in a good mood. If I'm in a bad mood, it's a sign that this day isn't going to work as well as it should. My wife [the painter Christina Oiticica] travels a lot for her work also, so mostly I'm alone. I'll have a shower, then get dressed — always in black. A black shirt, black jeans, maybe a black sweater, though sometimes I wear white sneakers.

Breakfast is the best meal of the day. I have black coffee and bread with olive oil, and orange juice. After that I go Nordic walking — with two sticks, one in each hand — for half an hour. People stare. Some say: "This man is crazy — there is no snow around!" Others say: "It looks like Paulo Coelho!" But as I'm walking fast they never disturb me. This is when I start thinking.

Then I return to my home and go to the internet. First I check my professional e-mail. Shall I do this interview or not? Shall I accept this invitation or not? Then I go to my blog at [Paulocoelhoblog.com](http://Paulocoelhoblog.com). And then to my social communities. On Facebook I have 407,859 fans. I'll spend the next three hours talking to people, sending e-mails, discussing ideas, enjoying the connection you can have with readers. I'm an internet junkie. Totally. I need to see a psychiatrist.

It is very important to me that my readers answer my question of the week on my blog. It might be what they think of suffering, or political correctness. This is a way for me and my readers to be connected. I publish chapters of my new book online, and I read their comments. Once a year I give a party for my friends and some of my readers. I cannot invite all of them.

I only write a new book every three years, and then I write from morning till evening, very fast. I was



awarded a Guinness World Record for being the most translated author for my book *The Alchemist*. People ask me why I am so popular, but I don't have an answer. I write for myself. I may get bad reviews, but I don't really care. I'm told my readership includes Bill Clinton, Julia Roberts, Madonna, Will Smith.

My motto is to be different and to make a difference. But there's a high price to pay for being different. I've paid a high price all my life. Some experiences have helped me to develop my will, and I'm proud of my scars; they are like medals. You get more stubborn; you follow your bliss. I think my blog encourages

readers to give the support to each other that they need. Knowing you are not alone encourages you to follow your bliss.

I have a light lunch, a ham or cheese sandwich. Then, if I have the time, I take a siesta for 20 to 40 minutes. When I wake up I go back onto the internet. I'm a Virgo, so my computer is very well organised.

Around 6pm I do Japanese Kyudo archery, which involves doing eight movements before shooting the arrow in a very ritualistic way. Then at 6.30 I read the *International Herald Tribune*, because by then the news is already old, and I can see how accurate it is.

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For me, dinner is always a celebration and needs to include red wine. It is important to have a beautiful table and candlelight. I have a maid who travels with us. If my wife is here we'll have dinner together. But I feel very comfortable with myself and I have no problems being alone. I only go out to eat if I'm forced to. I have made a lot of money, which gives you the freedom to be simple.

I eat everything from red meat pasta to Japanese food, and I always drink local wine. I like to eat in silence, but not like in a monastery. I like to pay attention to the food. Then I go outside and I smoke. I love smoking and I don't feel guilty whatsoever. I just smoke six or seven a day, so I don't think I will die because of smoking.

After dinner I try to walk again. And I think about the day. Then, around 10pm, I go to a movie or I rent one. The movie can help me think about my life and my work. Then I take another shower. I go to bed and I spend a minimum of two hours reading. I love reading. At the moment it is a very thick book by an ex-broker which is totally surrealistic called *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

I pray when I wake up — a special prayer, a Hail Mary and Our Father — and I pray at 6pm, and then I pray when I go to bed. My prayers are very important: "God, don't let me go astray." You can imagine the responsibility because of my celebrity. I could easily do workshops and conferences and make a lot of money that way, but don't feel I should do this. I feel that would somehow betray what is in my books. And I think people are empowered by themselves: I don't have to teach anything. I go to sleep immediately, such a deep sleep that people could be breaking into my bathroom and I wouldn't wake up. *Paulo Coelho's latest book, The Winner Stands Alone, is just out*

**Interview by Ann McFerran.  
Portrait by Magali Delporte**